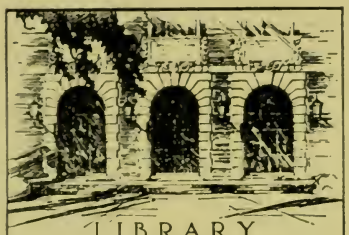

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WILLIAM BATHURST.

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BATHURST.

BY

LEWIS HOUGH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

STOLE AWAY!

Miss Stifton was imparting geographical information to one half of her pupils in the schoolroom, while the other half were in the dining-room taking a drawing lesson from Minnie Cook. She was not a very grand artist herself, but she knew the first principles, could copy a picture very nicely, and take a sketch from nature, either in pencil or water-colours, quite well enough to give a stranger a good idea of the scene, or to preserve a pleasant remembrance of it. And as "in the world of the blind the one-eyed are kings," she was a female Millais in the opinion of the establishment.

She did not give herself very much trouble, but after seeing that each girl had her pencils, paper, copy, and india-rubber, left her pupils to their own devices, and seating herself in a big chair at the head of the table, commenced the study of a long letter which she had received from Mary Johnstone that morning; and she looked so nice and pretty and quaint in her endeavour to assume a magisterial air on these occasions, that Miss Higginbottom had christened her "Goody Two-shoes"—a name by which she was now quite as often called as by any other.

"Please, Miss Minnie," said a pretty little flaxen-haired, large-blue-eyed doll of eight, coming up to the big chair, "need I go on drawing straight lines?—it is so stoopid!"

"And so it is, darling," said Minnie, kissing her. "What would you like to do better?"

"There is a pump in my copy-book. I should like to draw the pump!"

"Well, go and draw the pump then, dear."

"Please, Goody," cried another little voice, "do speak to Ann Jenkyns. We are playing at *oughts and crosses*, and she will begin every time!"

"Oh, Ann, but that is not fair," replied the referee. "When you have won a game you ought to let Jenny begin next time."

"But the one who begins is sure to beat," expostulated Ann Jenkyns, ingenuously.

"I say, Goody Twoshoes, dear," said Polly Higginbottom, "do come here, and try to draw me a likeness of governess. I have been trying ever so long, and I can't get her nose."

"Oh, Polly, leave me alone a bit, there is a good girl. I want to read my letter," answered Minnie.

And, indeed, this letter was a puzzle for a Sphinx, if Sphinxes care to guess riddles as well as give them, which I am not quite sure about.

"Be sure, my dearest Minnie. In truth, though, you will not doubt it. The fact is, I am all in a state of confusion to-day; and I am afraid you will find it difficult to make my letter out; I mean to say be sure my silence does not arise from forgetfulness. *H*all are well, as Mrs. Brown would say—how that woman does aspirate in the wrong place!"

And so on, with short disconnected sentences of dark meaning, running through eight closely-written pages. Minnie began to fear that Mary had written during the paroxysms of a brain-fever, when she came to the postscript.

"P.S.—I fear that my letter is rather unintelligible, but you know my habit of expressing the principal meaning of my sentences in the first words of them, and will perhaps be able to decipher my meaning."

"The first words of the sentences! Ah! let me see," said Minnie to herself; and she began again, and wrote down all the words

with capital letters as she went on, with this result:

"Be In The Hall If You Can At Three On Tuesday Afternoon And Do Not Be Surprised At Anything Or Anybody I Durst Not Write More Plainly Since I Know Papa Has Cautioned *Her* To Open My Letters As He Suspects I Send Messages For Someone."

"Tuesday? Why, to-day was Tuesday. Three o'clock? It was now eleven. She could easily manage to be in the hall at any time she liked, for that was the way to the drawing-room, to which she had free access, for the purpose of looking for any book she might want. Still, it was better to arrange beforehand what to say and do, for fear she should be flurried. At the time specified she would be engaged with a music-class; she would take the opportunity then at dinner-time of carrying one of the needful exercise books up to the drawing-room; at five minutes to three she would miss it, ask Miss Stifton if

she had it in her desk, receive a negative answer, and go to fetch it, passing through the hall while the hour was striking. All this scheme made her remarkably grave, quiet, and serious, so that Polly Higginbottom opined that Goody Twoshoes wanted her dinner.

"Well, I do wish it was one o'clock, certainly," said the little prevaricator.

"Polly has no soul," murmured the heretical and romantic Clarissa Tucker, seating herself on the edge of the table close to the amateur teacher. "Now I know what it is, Minnie, dear—either you are torn from him, or he is faithless; I have suffered both calamities, and can sympathise with you. Your heart is broken, and you are sinking into an early grave; my heart is broken also—I too am sinking into an early grave. Pour your griefs into my sympathising bosom."

Minnie would have liked to take the girl into her confidence, as she felt that it would be a relief to talk about this mysterious busi-

ness to some one. But she did not dare, as the knowledge that anyone was watching her would add to her nervousness at the critical moment, so she said she could not tell her then, but she might at some other time when they were alone.

At a few minutes before three that afternoon, a gentleman dressed in black square-cut garments, and a white neckcloth, who had auburn hair, and wore spectacles, approached Miss Stifton's school and rang the bell. He was not altogether unlike Harry Johnstone, only that young man was not a clergyman, had black hair, and did not wear spectacles. Still, the resemblance was striking.

"Can I see Miss Stifton?" inquired he, when the maid opened the door.

"Yes, sir; will you walk in?" said the maid, and he crossed the threshold and commenced wiping his shoes vigorously on the mat. At this moment, and as the servant was opening the drawing-room door, Minnie

Cook issued from that apartment with a large music-book in her hand. The clerical-looking gentleman showed her a letter; she half-opened the leaves of the book, and he dropped the note into it as he passed, without the action being perceived by the maid. As this note, however, was neither a quaver, semi, or demisemiquaver, Minnie thought it was misplaced, and paused outside the schoolroom-door to transfer it to her pocket.

"I think there is someone who wants to see you, Miss Stifton," she said innocently, when she entered the room.

"Indeed!" cried Miss Sappho, flushing up with the hope of a new pupil.

"Yes, Jane was admitting a gentleman as I left the drawing-room; oh! here she is!"

"Please, m'm, there is a clergyman as wishes to speak with you."

A ray of joy illumined Miss Stifton's features as she swept grandly from the room.

Harry Johnstone was treated to a curtsy

of exactly the same pattern as that which had been presented a couple of months previously to his mother, and he bowed so low in return that his wig nearly tumbled off.

"Madam," said he, when he had recovered his hair and his perpendicular, "I have heard great things of your excellent seminary" (curtsy No. 2, corresponding bow more moderate), "and I should like to know your terms."

"Your daughter, sir?" inquired Miss Sappho, taking a quire of circulars from a drawer and folding one of them up.

"No; I am not married at present, though I hope to be so in a week or two."

"Oh! indeed." And the worthy schoolmistress beheld with her mind's eye a vista of little pupils yet unborn, bringing future grist to her scholastic mill; and she looked interested.

"But I have a sister," continued Harry, determined to tell no more downright lies than were absolutely necessary.

"Is the young lady a child?"

"No, not exactly; she is more than fifteen, in fact. Is this situation healthy?" said Harry, who found that he must take and keep the initiative in the questioning, or he would get among the breakers.

"It is reckoned the most salubrious spot in the neighbourhood," replied Miss Stifton.

"Oh! indeed. I inquired because I noticed that the adjoining house was untenanted."

"Oh! that is in consequence of the piano," said the mistress, smiling.

"I see, to be sure—ha, ha!" returned Harry, and he proceeded to ask all the questions he could invent.

"Perhaps you would like to look at our dining-room and school-room?" said Miss Sappho at last, in answer to a query as to whether those apartments were roomy, lofty, and well-ventilated.

"I should very much, if you please—if it

were not for disturbing the young ladies," replied Harry, with an inward chuckle.

"Oh! no, it will not disturb them," replied Miss Stifton, leading the way. "It is not often," she added, "that the step of a gentleman is allowed to cross our scholastic threshold—but a clergyman is different. This is the school-room."

Harry Johnstone almost regretted his hardihood when he saw his little Minnie stuck up in the chair of the truant schoolmistress with a class of girls round her; but he managed to swallow the laughter which nearly choked him, and bowing to Minnie, he half-turned to Miss Sappho and said,

"Your sister, I presume?"

"No," replied the schoolmistress—"a talented pupil, who, having outstripped all her schoolfellows, is kind enough to assist me occasionally in the work of tuition. She is intended for a governess, and it is good practice for her," she added, as they left the room.

And then Harry, leaving an imaginary name and address, bowed himself off.

At four o'clock school was over, and then Minnie found an opportunity of reading her smuggled letter unobserved. This is what it contained—

"DEAREST,—The next house is untenanted, but I have found a way into it. The balcony at the back connects the two houses; come out upon that at six o'clock to-morrow morning—there is only a low railing to get over, and I shall be there to help you. Once in the empty house, we can walk quietly into the back lane unobserved, and there we shall find a fly. Bring what clothes and things you can pack up without suspicion. All is arranged; you have a female cousin, it seems, at Monmouth, who will receive you, and you are to be married from her house. We shall get to Monmouth to-morrow evening—but be punctual, as the Chepstow steamboat starts at seven. A thousand kisses."

I appeal now to the most strong-minded lady who honours me by reading this, whether such a letter would not, at the age of the recipient, have flurried her? It certainly had that effect on Minnie, who was nervous, absent, and at the same time afraid of her nervousness and pre-occupation of mind being noticed. So, early in the evening she said she had a headache, which, I am sorry to confess, was a shocking fib, and went to bed, though it was not much sleep she had when she got there; and Misses Higginbottom and Tucker, who slept in the same room, need not have put the painful restraint that they did upon their tongues when they retired for the night.

Very early on the following morning the former was aroused by someone walking about, and, opening her eyes, she saw Minnie half-dressed, putting some things into her box.

"Oh, my stars! Goody, it is never time to get up!" cried the exclamatory maiden.

"No, Polly, hush!" said Minnie. "Do not speak so loud, there is a dear."

"Why, what ever is the matter?" asked Clarissa Tucker, in her turn awaking and sitting up in bed. "What are you packing up for?"

"I am going to be run away with," replied Minnie, quietly.

"By a man?" asked Miss Higginbottom, in a loud whisper.

"Yes."

"Lor! ! ! ! !"

It would take a page of !'s to get the intonation.

"She is about to elope with him she adores, celestial!" exclaimed Clarissa, clapping her hands, and glancing up at the ceiling. "In a chaise and four to Gretna Green, with people in post-chaises galloping behind, and firing pistols at her all the way. Happy gurl!"

"Criminy! what a lark! I wish some

fellow would run away with me. I had sooner it was a soldier, I think. Is yours a soldier, Goody?"

"No; it is the gentleman who came into the schoolroom yesterday afternoon."

"What! the clergyman with spectacles?"

"No; he is not a clergyman, and he does not generally wear spectacles. That was a disguise to get into the school."

"Well, I never! Of all the quiet, sly, demure little devils——"

"Oh! what a word!—fie, Polly!" cried Clarissa.

"—I ever saw, you beat the lot! But, I say, Goody, dear, why, I forgot that you will go quite away, and will not come back! Oh, my pretty Twoshoes, come here and bekissed!"

And the kindly romp burst out crying.

"What is life but one continual parting with those we love?" inquired Miss Tucker, getting out of bed, and going over to claim her share of embraces.

And they all three sobbed together for five minutes comfortably.

"But it is no good crying," said the volatile Higginbottom, at the expiration of that time. "You must have something of mine—a gown, or a ribbon, anything, just for a keepsake. Stay, there is my cameo ring—you must take it, Goody. And now, how are you going to be run away with?"

"I am going out of the window," said Minnie.

"What, this one?"

"Yes, on to the balcony, and so along to where it joins the balcony of the next house. There he is to take my box——"

"He? Ah! yes, to be sure, the man who is to run off with you—go on!"

"And then to help me over into the next balcony; then we are to go down through the deserted house, and run off to get married. I do not know much more at present."

"And when are you to get out of window?"

"At six o'clock; very soon now—it is a quarter to."

"Oh my! what a shindy there will be when it is found out that you have disappeared!" cried Miss Polly, half laughing at the idea of the commotion which would ensue, half crying at the parting with her friend. "And what fibs Clarissa and I must tell. We must keep pretty nearly to the same story, Clarissa, if we can."

Minnie and her two young friends exchanged some trifling bits of jewelry for keepsakes, and then the window was opened, a process which required the removal of a wash-hand-stand, and the withdrawal of sundry bolts, for it was a French window, intended to open from an inner drawing-room on to the balcony, and had been blocked up since the apartment had been converted into a bedroom. Then, after a farewell embrace, Minnie stepped out on to the balcony, and took her box from Miss Higginbottom, who

handed it to her. Harry Johnstone was waiting on the other side of the iron rail which divided the balconies, and over which he easily lifted first Minnie, then her box. As he was entering the deserted house, to show Minnie the way, he thought he heard something which might be a giggle or a sob, and looking in the direction from which the sound proceeded, he saw two round faces, fringed with night-caps, protruding from the window. They started back like frightened rabbits, however, when he smiled at them, and, as he closed the sash of his own window, he heard them fastening theirs.

Short was the greeting between the lovers, as they both felt too anxious to get away to waste much time. There was nothing, however, to stop them ; the box was a small one, which Harry could carry with ease, the carriage was in the lane, and in half an hour's time they were on board the steamer abreast of the Hot Wells.

They were rather anxious and fidgety until the vessel got under weigh, but directly the paddles began to revolve they were quite easy, and went to their breakfast—which meal, though it is not usual to mention such things on these occasions, I have it, on the best authority, was a very good one.

What a journey that was! Cannot the reader remember some one or two days unlike all others?—when there was a strangeness about everything, when the air seemed purer, the sky brighter, the grass greener than on ordinary occasions; when the men and women he met were not like the mortals of every day,

> "But had suffered a sea change
> Into something rich and rare;"

when it would not have particularly surprised him had he seen a ghost, or found himself able to fly, or heard the birds and beasts talking, or learned that the world was coming to an end; when it would have been the

most natural thing to awake and find that he was dreaming? The first return from school for the holidays; the first glimpse of a mountain range, or (if the spectator has not been deluded by the poets into expecting the waves to be about a thousand feet high) of the sea, will often produce this feeling; and I should think that most young ladies running away with young gentlemen experienced it to perfection, though it is to be hoped that very few of them will ever adopt so dangerous a course.

To say that Minnie was happy, would give no idea of her state of mind, of which happiness was only one of the ingredients. Sudden relief from a state of uncertainty and expectation, freedom from an uncomfortable position, the novelty of the situation, the excitement of escape, the sense that she had given herself up to the man she loved and had cast all responsibility upon him—this was surely enough to intoxicate a young girl who had

been brought up in an atmosphere singularly free from change and excitement. She had the most implicit confidence in Harry, a faith which, it must be remembered, was not the result of a sudden and blind infatuation, but had grown up with her from infancy. Her present lover had, before gradually assuming that character, been to her for many years an heroic brother, to whom all the household, not even excepting his reserved and self-important father, had paid a sort of deference not unfrequently seen in middle-class English families, where an only son associates with school or college companions in a higher social position than that occupied by his parents. So she had done what he had bidden her without a moment's hesitation, quite convinced that what he decided upon must be the best course to adopt; and now she was contented to be with him, under his wing, to eat her breakfast, walk up on deck, admire the woods which clothed the steep banks of the Avon,

the expanding Severn, the distant blue hills of Wales, without thinking to ask him what was to happen next.

This lack of curiosity surprised and amused Harry Johnstone, who talked for some time about all sorts of indifferent matters—the rise of the tide, the colour of the water, the autumnal tints upon the foliage, to see how long it would continue. At last he said, laughing,

"Well, Minnie, do you not wish to know where we are going to?"

"Oh! yes—by-the-bye, where *are* we? I think your letter said that I had a cousin, or something?"

"That is all you care about your newly-discovered relation, is it? Yes, Mr. Horace Bathurst, who has been excessively kind, has written to a lady distantly related to you, who lives at Monmouth; and she has asked you to go to her house and stay there until the necessary forms are gone through, previous

to our marriage. We are now going across the Severn to Chepstow; when there we shall take a carriage and post to Monmouth. She is a regular old maid, and rather difficult to get on with, but you will not mind putting up with her whims for a few days?"

"Oh! no."

"And then, when we are married, we are to go to London. I have obtained a situation as clerk in an insurance office—the pay is not very great, and we shall be poor people, Minnie."

"Yes, I know," said Minnie, quite seriously. "I am to light the fire and cook the dinner, you know, in an attic. I shall like it much better than teaching."

"Oh! Minnie, you did look so funny!" cried Harry, bursting out laughing at the recollection of the scene of the afternoon before; "you only wanted a pair of horn spectacles and a rod in your hand to be complete."

"It was too bad of you to come into the school-room," said Minnie; "I could hardly keep my countenance."

"And I am sure I had a job to do so. But as I was saying, we shall be poor, though not quite so badly off as you anticipated. One servant at least we shall be able to keep. I have taken a small semi-detached house on the Hampstead Road, where I think we shall be comfortable; if not, we can change at the end of the year."

And then Harry told Minnie of Mr. Horace Bathurst's generosity, and a great deal more, and received in turn a full account of the proceedings at Miss Stifton's academy. And so they got to Chepstow, and from thence started for Monmouth, the journey to which place seemed remarkably short, though they did not arrive till late in the afternoon.

Proceeding at once to the principal hotel, Harry Johnstone engaged a room for himself, and left his portmanteau, and then inquired

for the residence of Miss Lloyd. That lady lived, it seemed, just outside the town; and the post-boy, following the directions he received, soon stopped at the garden-gate of a pretty two-storied villa, and pulled a brass bell-handle of such exquisite brightness that it seemed a shame to sully it by the touch.

Presently a female servant, who was elderly, ugly, and prim, but who, from her cap to her stockings, was a model of delicate neatness and purity, opened the house door and came down to the gate, towards which the post-boy slewed round the horses' heads.

"Now then, marm," cried the "boy," "open them gates a little sharper, please."

"Open the gates! and what for, indeed?"

"What for? Why, you don't suppose I can drive over them, do ye?"

"You mean to say you were going to drive in here? A pretty mess you would make of the gravel, indeed! No—the lady and gen-

tleman will be pleased to alight and walk up to the house."

So the lady and gentleman *were* pleased to alight; and the latter, having settled with the "boy," carried the box of the former up to the house.

"Be pleased to be careful about wiping your shoes, sir," said the prim female, and she ushered them upstairs to the drawing-room, where Miss Lloyd stood ready to receive them.

She was a short and somewhat stout middle-aged lady, dressed in a black gown of rich silk but very old-fashioned in cut, with a short waist and sleeves, broad and full at the top but tight at the wrist, which gave her arms the appearance of legs of mutton. She wore a false front, and a large cap intensely starched. She had small eyes, prominent brow, and a large lower jaw; her favourite attitude, whether sitting or standing, was to keep her hands folded before her, the palm of the right on

the back of the left; and whenever she spoke, or was considering anything intently, she had a habit of patting the one which was covered with the other.

As Minnie entered the room, this lady took her measure as carefully as if she had been for sale—her right hand patting away all the time vehemently. Apparently the scrutiny was satisfactory, for at last she said,

"You may come and kiss me, miss."

And when Minnie had gone through the permitted ceremony, Miss Lloyd released her right hand from its customary position, and, advancing three fingers towards Harry Johnstone, said,

"You may shake hands."

As Harry availed himself of this licence, he saw at once that one of the good lady's weaknesses was the exaction of a good deal of deference from all who came near her. Following up this cue, he said directly—

"I hope, Miss Lloyd, you will pardon my

presumption in having contracted a marriage engagement with Miss Cook without your sanction. My excuse is that I was not aware that she had a relation living in England. Permit me, now that I am better informed, to rectify my error, and request your consent to our union."

"Well," said Miss Lloyd, her hands flapping at the rate of two to the second. "I hear a very good account of you from my lawyer, Mr. Bathurst; and I do not wish to stand in the way of what young people are fools enough to consider their happiness. You can have her, Mr. Johnstone, and you may dine here to-day, at half-past five—a bit of codfish and a chicken. It is past five now, so we shall not have long to wait."

Nor had they, for very shortly afterwards dinner was announced, and Harry rose and offered her his arm.

"No, I thank you, no. I prefer to go down alone. Can't bear to take hold of

anybody's arm—the banisters are so much firmer. Quite right to offer, though—quite right. I like to see young people show delicate attentions to their betters."

They sat down to table, and some soup was put before Harry to help. In serving it out he unfortunately spilt about six drops.

"Jervis!" cried Miss Lloyd to the prim maidservant who was waiting, "change the cloth. Could not possibly eat my dinner off a dirty table-cloth."

So everything was removed, Harry poured out a volume of apologies, and they all sat in their places, and looked—at least two of them—foolish, until the cloth was changed and the soup replaced.

"Take this away—I cannot touch this! too much seasoning, a great deal. Not fit to be eaten. I will speak to the cook about it in the morning. Take it all away!"

The two guests thought the soup very nice, and being hungry enough after their journey,

would gladly have finished it. But that was not the will of the lady of the house, so they let their plates go without murmuring.

Next came the fish, which Harry prepared to help according to custom.

"No; do not give me that—I do not care for that part; you and Minnie may eat it. Give me the sound and the liver—yes, that is it," said Miss Lloyd.

And when Harry had given her all the sound and liver there was, and she had fished all the oysters but three out of the butter-boat, she seemed happier, and the others got some dinner.

Next came the chicken, and this time Harry asked his hostess what part she preferred.

"Give me the meat off the two wings, and the liver," said she; and she had them, and finished them too.

It was the same with everything; and at tea she finished her first cup before she helped

anyone else, that she might get two good ones.

"I do like the best of the brew!" she said naively.

But though a shade selfish, a thought fidgety, and a trifle greedy, Miss Lloyd had her good points; and as both Minnie and Harry humoured her in every possible manner, she acquired a considerable liking for the young people, and was inclined to be generous towards them. Her harbouring Minnie for three weeks was no small kindness for a person of her temperament, but to this favour she was inclined, at the end of about ten days, to add a positive present.

"Mr. Johnstone," she said, when Harry called one day, "I want to speak to you. Go out of the room, child, for a bit" (to Minnie). "Take a chair—no, not that one, it is covered with needle-work, and not meant for men's trousers; no, nor that, which is too slight, and would break with your weight; that one

will do—yes. Now, you are poor, I know, are you not?"

"Yes, that I certainly am."

"I knew it, because you were so civil. People who are comfortably off never will stand my ways. *Her* father wouldn't. Well, if you are poor, you had better let me provide your wife with dresses, body-linen, and all that."

Harry said that he had not got the remotest objection to such an arrangement, and, for the next few days, the old lady was in her element, carrying Minnie from shop to shop, and picking and choosing from breakfast till dinner. And as shopping was her delight, and her appetite for it increased as she fed, her protégée, got a very handsome trousseau.

In spite of all which, the three weeks dragged somewhat heavily, and both the young people were heartily glad when the time for escape came. That the wedding was

somewhat quiet you may imagine; Miss Lloyd witnessed the ceremony from her own pew; the clerk gave away the bride; there were no bridesmaids, favours, cake, cards, or breakfast. But the knot was tied quite firmly enough for all practical purposes, in spite of the absence of all that; and when the newly-married couple left Monmouth, it was without any such feelings as proved so fatal to Mrs. Lot; there was no fear of *their* being turned into pillars of salt—supposing such a penalty had been annexed to looking back—on the occasion.

Miss Lloyd had been very kind, and they were very grateful to her; but, as Mr. Horace Bathurst had before hinted, she was trying!

CHAPTER II.

A "CARPENTER'S SCENE" CHAPTER.

Mr. Johnstone had flattered himself that his son would come round when he found that he was firm in his resolution not to give his countenance to the marriage. He laughed at the intimation Harry sent him that he intended to seek his own living, and keep his word to Minnie, at any rate, and looked upon it as the petulance of a headstrong young fellow, who had too much good sense to mar his own career by putting his threat into execution. But when he received a distracted letter from the unfortunate Miss Stifton, giving an account of the mysterious disappear-

ance of the pupil who had been entrusted to her care, he saw that he had miscalculated, and flew into such a violent passion that his wife and daughter really trembled for his reason. Whatever his faults and failings, Mr. Johnstone was not devoid of natural affection; Harry was his only son, his favourite child, his pride and his ambition. He himself, though successful up to a certain point, had failed in his endeavours to rise above that; he could never realise sufficient fortune to enable him to relinquish business, and take the position which substantial funded or landed wealth gives a man in England. On the contrary, the speculations he entered into, with a view to realize this dream of his life, all failed, and left him still dependent upon his ordinary business, but minus the savings which he had painfully accumulated from its profits. But his son, endowed with abilities which were really very respectable, and which, to a father's eye, seemed of a first-

rate order, brought up with advantages which a half-educated man is always disposed to exaggerate the importance of, what might his career not be at the Bar, a profession which, more often than any other, has served as the stepping-stone to greatness?

He made no attempt to trace or impede the fugitives; his authority over Cook's daughter was of too doubtful a character for any such measures, which would probably only result in scandal, inquiry, and his own ultimate defeat. No, the only thing to be done was to keep quiet; and if people out of doors questioned him on the subject, to shake his head and lament the impetuous folly of two young people who must needs get married before they were of an age or in a position to do so with common prudence, and to hope that, contrary to the experience of ages in such matters, they might not repent at leisure.

A man cannot remain in a violent passion

for a very long period, and Mr. Johnstone speedily quieted down; and if at that time anybody could have read his heart, and divulged what was passing there to his family, it would have been much to the advantage of all parties. For, the mischief being done, Mr. Johnstone was not unwilling to make the best of it; and had Harry come to him, expressed his sorrow at having crossed his will, prayed for forgiveness, and consented to leave his bride in her old position in the house, while he returned to the university, took his degree, and entered himself at the Temple, ten to one but what he would have met him half way.

But, alas! for want of some such moral stethoscope, Harry, his mother, and sister, thought that such a proceeding would rather tend to exasperate the angry man, and so England has (perhaps) lost, or rather missed, one of the best chancellors that ever sat on the woolsack.

For some weeks Mr. Johnstone was in daily expectation of some such overture, and then the last drop of bitters was poured into his cup of disappointment. It so happened that a matter of business took him to the Original Fire and Life Office, and as he passed to the secretary's room, there, amongst the common clerks, perched on a high stool, and poring over a ledger, he saw his son.

Harry coloured and rose; but his father passed him with a stare and a sneer, though he could have sobbed aloud with the anguish of baffled hopes.

So, then, the last chance was gone—the child whom he had pampered and indulged, to whom he had afforded an expensive education on purpose that he might, before everything else, be a gentleman, by whose reflected light he himself was to shine in a sphere on the boundary of which he was but just hovering—was a clerk! Enough, the young man had chosen his own career, let him enjoy it—

he had made his own bed, let him lie on it.

It must not be supposed that Harry, on his side, felt no pang at breaking in this manner with his father; on the contrary, the state of affairs was a great drawback to the happiness he otherwise enjoyed with his little wife. But this sorrow he was careful to drive away or conceal, lest Minnie should reproach herself with being the cause of it. His mother and sister had visited the little villa where the newly-married couple had made their nest; and it was by their advice that he had hitherto delayed making any overtures towards his enraged father. But after what had happened that day, he could wait no longer, and he wrote him a long letter, giving a detailed account of what he had done, lamenting their estrangement, and imploring a reconciliation that very afternoon.

This was another mistake; he should have

written either a week earlier or a week later; as it was, the letter arrived at the moment when the recipient's feelings were the keenest and the bitterest, and it remained unanswered.

Poor Mrs. Johnstone was very unhappy about the state family matters had got into. She, too, was disappointed at her son having struck into a path of life which might be trod with equal ease by ordinary mortals, instead of pursuing that brilliant career which her maternal partiality had mapped out for him. But this was not the principal cause of her regret. He seemed to be happy and contented, and so long as that was the case the position he occupied in the world was of minor importance; what grieved her was the breach remaining so long open with his father. She knew her husband too well to plead with him, far less to remonstrate upon his obdurate behaviour; and was perfectly aware that interference would only addle any

conciliatory eggs which he might be hatching in his mind. If she ever spoke to him of Harry it was in a sorrowful manner, as she might have alluded to one that was dead; and a stranger would have imagined from her manner that she felt entirely with her husband on the subject.

The first symptom which he gave of softening was this. On the 1st of December, when he gave his wife the cheque for housekeeping expenses, which it was his custom to draw at the commencement of every month, she found that it was *double* the usual amount; whereupon, somewhat to the stiff man's astonishment, she kissed him. She did not say a word, but that kiss was eloquent enough—it was the first time she had done such a thing uninvited for the last fifteen years—Mr. Johnstone being a somewhat starchy subject for habitual osculatory demonstration.

Next day she went with Mary to Hampstead Road, and spent the afternoon with

Minnie, gave her the money, and instructed her to tell Harry, when he came home in the evening, that he might now write a second letter to his father.

Harry acted upon this hint, and received a formal pardon, and invitation to the paternal house, with leave to bring his wife with him. For, as we are commanded to forgive our greatest enemies, he felt it his duty to pardon even her deceit, hypocrisy, and ingratitude. But he hated her like poison all the same.

And so the father and son were re-united by a slight thread, which might become stronger in time ; and Minnie could go over and spend the day with Mrs. Johnstone and Mary whenever she chose, which was not often, however, for she found plenty of employment in looking after her little household, and in learning to be handy with her needle, a science she had much neglected, and in which she was determined to become a proficient ; for she felt what her husband had

sacrificed for her, and made up her mind to assist him in the task of providing the means of living by the study of economy, a virtue which is all the more honourable to those who, contrary to their natural inclinations, practise it, because it is so generally despised and treated almost as a vice. And certainly it is often difficult to distinguish accurately between thrift and meanness, which is a pity; for the observer, who looks below the surface, will find that generosity is more often allied to economy than to extravagance, and it is far more easy to spend recklessly than to deny oneself a pleasure.

But it is of no use to preach; the world always has admired the open-handed, careless spendthrift, who gives good dinners (provided he shares them himself), drives and rides good horses, lives generally beyond his income, runs into debt, robs his tradesmen, and entails poverty and misery upon his family—simply because he is the incarnation of selfish-

ness, and will not resist the gratification of the whim of the moment—and it always will; while it always has and always will sneer at the man who pinches and denies himself, that he may be able to succour those who would perish without his unostentatious aid.

For the world which honours and scorns is the world which eats the dinners and uses the carriages of the one, not the world which is fed and clothed by the other.

Minnie then would much rather have lolled in an easy-chair and read a novel, played the piano or executed wonderful chair-backs in Berlin wool, and paid somebody else to darn her own and her husband's stockings; but she adopted the latter and less pleasing occupation; and if any fair reader does not admire her for it, I pity her—reserving likewise some touch of compassion for her husband, if he is as poor a man, that is, as Harry Johnstone was. That young man has often declared to me (with what of exaggeration arising from defective

memory I know not) that he never once regretted having been taken down a place or two in the social class. His occupation was somewhat monotonous at first, but he soon became used to that; and the study of his fellow-clerks, men whose thoughts, likings, dislikings, aspirations, and habits differed so widely from those of his former companions, interested him exceedingly. And then, when he went home after office hours, he found a bright fire, a happy face, and a clean table-cloth, with the dinner things laid out upon it, with pleasant chatter about the little events of the day. After dinner a pipe, then an amusing book—and Minnie liked to be read out to—then tea, then continuation of the book, if interesting.

Now and then, for a great treat, they would take an omnibus after dinner and go back to London, for the purpose of visiting some theatre; and there, in the upper boxes, they would enjoy some five hours of happiness,

which gave them matter for pleasant rumination and discussion for weeks afterwards. For as Mr. Johnstone disapproved of the stage, which his lack of imagination, artistic taste, and the sense of humour rendered him otherwise utterly unable to appreciate, the theatre was a new delight to Minnie, and nearly so to her husband.

Altogether they were so happy, that I dare not dwell on their felicity, lest some impulsive reader should be drawn by their example into an imprudent match, and then utter unkind words against the chronicler of this veracious history. There is another reason for my reticence—the happiness of our fellow-creatures, whether domestic or otherwise, makes very dull reading, and I dread being skipped even more than being execrated. I therefore here thrust into the lower bar of my grate (with the poker, not seeing the force of punishing myself Cranmer fashion) an elaborate account of the Christmas-dinner eaten by the young

couple, and merely mention that it had been agreed that nothing should be said about their spending that day at Acton, unless Mr. Johnstone himself proposed it; and that, as he was silent on the subject, they feasted alone, and that it was the first and only Christmas meal they ever shared in that solitary manner, as, on the next occasion, they were so absurd as to have their wretched bambino into the room, and to force a piece of plum-pudding into the miserable creature's mouth. But wo—o, mare! steady! you must not bolt forward like that: moderate your impatience and gather yourself well together, you will have to take ten years' flying presently.

Mr. Johnstone's estrangement from his son caused him to turn in a demonstrative manner towards his other child. What a difference! The one degrading and pauperising himself by marrying in opposition to his father's wishes; the other about to be raised by

obedience to fortune and happiness. This was the text upon which he was never weary of holding forth to his family, his friends, those who believed in him—in short, to all whom he could get to listen. To point his moral more decidedly, he paid immense attention to William Bathurst and his mother, called frequently on the latter, and had numerous dinner-parties, for the purpose of introducing all sorts of city acquaintances to the former. At these he would sometimes, when the ladies had retired, propose the health of his future son-in-law, and spread the butter on so thick, that some of the guests began to look upon William as a future millionnaire; while others, who knew their host's soft place, concluded the prospective bridegroom to be aristocratically connected.

In the meantime, while Harry Johnstone had been shooting grouse and touting for clerkships, running off with maidens, and conducting himself generally in a dazzling and

episodical manner, William Bathurst had been working hard at the law, had passed his examination and signed the deed of partnership. He was now a solicitor, working on his own account, improving the shining hour, and storing up honeyed six-and-eightpences for his own delectation, and not for the profit of another.

"Now I have lived to see you in the business," said his Uncle Horace, on the occasion of the above-mentioned signature transaction, "I am easy. When my health began to decline, I sometimes feared that I should not live to see you established. I thank God for sparing me up to this day. I have done what I promised my poor brother, and now I am ready. There is only one thing I ask you—William, if, when I am taken, the business is more than you can manage single-handed, take Skinner into partnership. I request this for the sake of both of you."

"Say no more, uncle," said William. "I

know and appreciate his services, and should have wished to do so even if it had not been your desire. But I hope that you have many years to live yet."

Mr. Horace smiled and shook his head.

"You are going to be married soon, your mother tells me?" he said, turning the subject.

"Yes—we have fixed for February. I am looking out for a house down Acton way, to be within easy reach of my mother and Mary's."

"Hum! not *too* near," said Mr. Horace, shaking his head; "not *too* near, I hope."

CHAPTER III.

A CHANGE OF DYNASTY.

THE English summer is a coquette from her cradle to her grave. She smiles her first sweet glance, and all nature loves her; the birds begin to pair, the snowdrops and primroses to expand; the strong man is intoxicated by the light of her soft eyes, the sweetness of her balmy kisses; the sick and aged creep from their chambers, and feel new life and vigour coursing through their veins as they sun themselves in her virgin loveliness. But like a coy beauty, offended by the bold admiration she excites, her smile soon changes

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to a frown, her genial air to icy coldness. The song of the birds is hushed, the flowers droop, the weak cower back to their firesides, saddened and death-stricken; the strong nerve themselves to bear the disappointment as best they may, and flatter themselves that they are now free from her influence. But after a long interval, she again unveils her beauty, again smiles upon her lovers, with a bolder and a brighter countenance, and all are once more at her feet. She weeps, and we are sad; she laughs, and we share her joy. At length, as she reaches maturity, and sees the time slipping by unenjoyed, she repents her past coyness, and returns our passion with an equal ardour, which, interrupted, it is true, by many a passionate storm, lasts sometimes for a fortnight beyond the honeymoon. Then comes coldness, indifference, alternating with fits of returning affection. But, alas! the cold fits grow longer and more frequent, the hot fits shorter and rarer, till the fickle flirt

grows weary of us altogether, and runs off to practise her stereotyped smiles and kindling glances in another hemisphere.

It was on the fourteenth of February that she made her first appearance in England eighteen years ago, principally, no doubt, out of compliment to Saint Valentine, but partly, perhaps, as a matter of kindness to Mary Johnstone, whose wedding-day it was. *Happy the bride whom the sun shines on*, says the old proverb—an utterance, may be, of some ancient and sententious milliner who had a proper sense of the disappointment which must fall upon all parties concerned when a toilet, which has occupied for weeks the thoughts of every female relation, friend, and domestic connected with the wearer, loses all its effect from the small number of spectators and the incongruity of its appearance. Can anything look worse, from an artistic point of view, than a white silk dress literally watered, an orange-flower wreath under an umbrella,

or satin shoes in a position intended by nature for goloshes only?

However, it is unnecessary to pursue this painful topic, as the day which saw Mary united to William Bathurst was magnificent.

Mr. Johnstone had been determined to make the affair as grand as he could, in order to mark distinctly the difference between the alliances formed by his two children.

Harry, the disobedient, had been coupled up secretly, meanly—himself ungroomed, his wife unattended by the conventional "bevy," and parented by a clerk—with not a single little boy or bottle of champagne to cheer him. Mary, the obedient, should be married "properly," and future generations would doubtlessly be benefited by the lesson.

Great indeed had been the preparations; multitudinous pairs of cards, coupled by a silver cord (since the silver cord has been loosened by the Divorce Act, the custom of sending these has very properly gone out), and encased

in highly-ornamental envelopes, were printed, sealed, and directed; a whole Oberland of snowy wedding-cakes was ordered; the most elaborate breakfast that could be prepared for money was provided by Blomteit and Grunter; the talents of an ingenious carpenter were called into play for the solution of the puzzle, "how to feed fifty people in a room which is crowded by twenty?" the largest allowance of bridesmaids had been selected, together with those *maximæ partes* of such assistants, their dresses; the bride's own costume had, after more discussion than would have sufficed to carry a bill through Parliament, been completed; a dean (Mr. Johnstone had strained every nerve, but vainly, for a colonial bishop) was engaged to tie the nuptial knot, which was to be pulled so uncommonly tight, that he was to have four other clergymen to help him to tug at it; the village school-children were engaged as supers, and knocked off their reading, writing, sewing, &c., at an

early hour every day, to rehearse strewing flowers in the bride's path; all the yellow chariots and white horses and post-boys to be had within a circuit of several miles, were retained for the occasion; a garret was entirely filled from floor to ceiling with white favours of large dimensions, a provision which the pussy-cat thought had been made against her approaching accouchement; and gratefully acting under that erroneous impression, found it a great improvement upon the coal-cellar. In short, nothing had been forgotten when the auspicious (I have a right to that mouth-filling word, after saying it was fine, and quoting the proverb, "Happy, &c.,") day arrived.

William Bathurst and his two grooms were in the church, waiting; they were dressed——

I tell you it is all right; the men's clothes must come first, because the ladies have not arrived yet; and as for omitting the dresses, I know better. Allow me a short

episodical anecdote, I pray you. I undertook one day to read out an account of some royal wedding to a party of ladies who were working, and occasionally comparing notes upon their work in an undertone, which is not an encouraging thing to one who is rather conceited about his power of elocution. I read about the virtues and personal charms of the contracting parties (whispers), of the romantic attachment which had drawn them together, quite independently of the wishes of their parents or peoples (cry of "I've dropped a stitch—can you take it up for me, Araminta?"). I struck into a really clever paragraph upon the serious political complications which might result from their union (a voice, "Can you not skip some of that?"). *I passed to a description of the dresses.* What a change! Every piece of work was laid in the fair lap beneath it; every charming head was turned towards me, every shelly ear was drinking in my accents. "Yes, yes, read that again."

"Did you say the slips were pinked or browned?" "How much a yard that lace? One hundred thousand francs—let me see, what is that in pounds?" Such were the only interruptions I now received; and I had a slight taste of the rapture of a fashionable West-end preacher. I also got a wrinkle. ——In the following manner: William Bathurst wore a blue coat and brass buttons, a white waistcoat, peach trowsers, patent leather boots, white kid gloves, a collar, blue neck-cloth, a shirt, a pair of braces, a flannel waistcoat, and cotton socks. Mr. Tomlinson, a gentleman with an aristocratic nose, was in evening dress. Mr. Shairish, the other groomsman, a stout and jocular stockbroker, had an olive coat, a sky-blue waistcoat, with silver stars all over it (so that his stomach represented space), and lavender trowsers, with a neat red plaid-like pattern meandering over them. This gentleman was much tickled by the idea of being a groom, called his prin-

cipal "Old Horse," desired to know if he wanted to be rubbed down, and was guilty of other similar absurdities—to all of which William Bathurst returned that awful smile peculiar to bridegrooms, and men suffering the first throes of sea-sickness.

But here come the bridesmaids, in apple-green gauze, poptoplains, and kerseymere shawls, with bonnets of white crape, *à la Jardinière*, with ten flounces, and a curtain, and a fall of ten feet—or inches, was it ?—of Valentian or Falernian lace ; and uncommonly well they looked.

Next came the BRIDE, attired in a magnificent frock of white watered *glacé* silk, covered with Brussels lace at—how much a yard he knows who paid for it ; I did not, thank goodness ! To this dress there were seven tuckers and fifteen gathers, and it was pinked so delicately that you could not distinguish the colour, and gored by a bull so highly trained, that he had not hurt it in the least ;

and ironed and mangled, and—and—yes, it was *goffered.* Over her head, and enveloping the upper portion of her body, was a veil of Valenciennes, which cost a great deal too; and her hair was dressed *à la maître d'hôtel.*

Phew! I have got over the worst part. The father of the bride handed her out of the carriage (she wore silk stockings, by-the-bye —I forgot that), and he had on a blue coat, buff waistcoat, and grey trowsers. Mrs. Bathurst had a grey silk gown and a new bonnet. The coachmen, postboys, the mass of the guests, the spectators, including the little boys, were attired in the ordinary way; at least I was unable to distinguish any difference between their attire and that of other people in similar respective positions.

I hope the above is all right. A lady told me what all the principal dresses were at the time, and I have a retentive memory. Still, if any slight error of detail has crept unawares into the account, the reader must remember

that I received the information at the time, that is eighteen years ago, and that I had not then, nor have I now, the remotest idea of what it all meant.

However they were attired, there stood William Bathurst and Mary Johnstone, two human beings about to do the most serious, solemn, and responsible thing that ordinary people can. They were about, that is, to take the Almighty God himself as a witness that they would perform certain duties and obligations towards each other. From that day forward to the end of their lives, each held the happiness or misery of the other in his or her hands. If in all sincerity they strove their best to fulfil the vows and promises they then made, well; they would ensure to themselves the greatest amount of happiness to which mortals ever attain; but woe to both of them if either grew cold, indifferent, or faithless! For there can be no middle course; it must be love or hatred, hap-

piness or misery—a human soul cursed, or a human soul blessed by us. And should our selfishness, fickleness, or unkindness harden and vitiate the heart of the other, when will our responsibility cease? With life? With time? We laugh at conjugal infidelity—we shudder at murder; but judging each by the misery caused, which is the greater crime?

The bride and bridegroom were not much oppressed with these reflections. Mary was flustered and bewildered at being such a prominent object in the show, and was absorbed by the determination not to cry, with all those people looking at her; while William Bathurst was entirely occupied by the consideration of how he should go through all his ring performances. He had to get the golden circlet out of a new waistcoat-pocket, give it to the clergyman, take it back, put it on Mary's finger, all without dropping it! Surely that was enough to engage any one's attention.

Mr. Horace Bathurst was present. He stood leaning his back against a pew-door, with his hands clasped negligently before him, and his eyes fixed dreamily on the young couple. But he saw them not; he was looking through them, through the church wall, through the long years, and his gaze rested on a fair young girl and a youth who had planned and dreamed for years of how they should stand together like that before the altar. But when the time came for the fulfilment of their plighted troth, the girl had changed—she loved him no longer, and wisely owned the truth—owned it with tears of sorrow for him, of shame for her own fickleness.

The man never saw her again, and never more contemplated marriage. If *she* were fickle, what must the rest of her sex be? Perhaps he was unfitted for woman's love; his nature was dispassionate, unprejudiced, vacillating, and what they worshipped was decision. Firmness in the wrong, firmness in

the right, no matter so long as it trampled upon all before it. He persuaded himself that it was better as it was—that it was a mistake and a folly for a man to pin his happiness to a woman's sleeve; and that he had, at once and for ever, extinguished his boyish passion. And yet now, more than forty years afterwards, he was sadly recalling her features, and dwelling on the years of happiness which had once seemed within his grasp. Pshaw! if that fair image of his memory were living, and could have been brought in the flesh before him, how many teeth of her own would she have had? How much golden hair? If the mental visions called up by the old people at weddings could be photographed, what an amusing collection one might make.

Mrs. Bathurst was also present, as I said above. She stood in a conspicuous position, and gave no thought to the past, all her feelings and emotions being concentrated in the present ceremony.

It was her abdication; and when the clergyman had concluded the benediction, she made the bride a stately bow, as much as to say, "I relinquish the government of my son and place him in your hands; rule him well and wisely, consulting not so much his pleasure as his welfare and happiness." Had not Mrs. Bathurst heard anything then about "honouring and obeying" in the course of the service? To be sure she had. But it is the easiest thing in the world for a pretty young wife to obey her husband in everything, and yet rule him as absolutely as Jonathan Whittle used to govern his negroes. She has only got to make him order what she chooses, and the problem is solved.

Harry Johnstone and his wife were also present at the ceremony; and it is to be hoped that the contrast between the present arrangements, and those attendant upon their own marriage, struck them with the desired remorse and humiliation. They did not show

many signs of shame or repentance in their outward behaviour, however, but hid their inward gnawings under smiling countenances, and appeared to be the happiest people there.

Well, the couple were moulded into one, and then they went to breakfast. The facetious stock-broker said that it was like going to tea, alluding to the shape of the table, which went straight down the room, and then had a cross-piece at the top. And Mr. Johnstone, to whom the observation was made, replied, "Ha! ha! capital! capital!" without being able to imagine what on earth the fellow meant.

The last carriage rolled back through the guardian griffins, who were bedizened for the occasion in evergreens and white favours; the guests were seated, packed like play-goers in the pit of a theatre, herrings in a barrel, or slaves in a hold; coffee was got rid of, the clatter of knives and forks became general,

the musical pop!—which, to many ears, surpasses the voice of a Pyne, the touch of a Goddard, or the bow of a Sainton—was continual, and the buzz of conversation swelled in volume.

"Poor Johnstone has done his best; and really the affair is not so very bad—considering!"

"Oh no; but did you see those griffins?" said a couple of men.

Then came two female voices.

"Dear Mary looked rather better than I thought she would; not pretty, exactly—of course that was impossible, but interesting!"

"Yes, it is the dress; brides always look rather nice, the costume is so becoming."

"But, my dear sir," said Harry Johnstone to his neighbour, a somewhat corpulent gentleman, who was making a very hearty meal, "it is true that you seem to be very well at present—and long may you continue so!—but there is no telling what may happen, the

strongest may be stricken down suddenly; there is no knowing what hidden disease may lurk in the constitution. It is every man's duty to insure his life in good time. You are in robust health! Good, the premiums will be lower."

"Hush! hush! sh–h!" and amid a rattling of knife-handles on the table, Mr. Johnstone rose to his feet.

There is no need to repeat his carefully prepared speech; suffice it that William Bathurst was surprised to learn that he was possessed of every possible, and a few impossible, virtues and talents, and that he felt quite overwhelmed with the torrent of compliments he had received, when, his father-in-law having sat down, and his health, and that of his bride, having been drunk enthusiastically, he got up to return thanks.

There was a stir, a rustling of dresses, a confusion, several hysterical shrieks. Mary caught her husband's arm, and cried,

"William, look to your mother!"

Mrs. Bathurst had sunk on the floor senseless. Her mission was ended, her task accomplished, her sovereignty abdicated, her spirit flown.

CHAPTER IV.

TEN YEARS LATER.

TEN years!—what a slice out of a human life! The story-teller can skip over that period of time by a stroke of his pen; the dramatist by dropping a curtain and putting "an interval of ten years" between two acts in the play-bill; but in the real prose-world, what a difference! Eighty-seven thousand, six hundred hours—hours of joy, of grief, of hope, of despair, go to make up the sum; what sacred fires of love, that seemed eternal as the stars, have cooled and faded; what voices whose music caused our hearts to throb with tender yearning have been silenced by

death; what dreams of ambition, of usefulness, of happiness, have turned to night-mares during the decade which has just past into darkness! Ten years!—what a difference there is between the little boy of ten and the young man of twenty; between the sanguine, confident, impulsive, trusting youth and the worldly, suspicious, experienced man of thirty! And yet perhaps both boy and young man have looked forward, the one to maturity, the other to independent establishment in the world, with a feverish impatience, which, when once arrived at middle age, they will recall with wonder at their own blindness. For to death many a man may look forward with longing; but to old age—never!

However, the reader will not find himself a day older for kindly following the narrator over the somewhat wide jump he has just taken, any more than he will have to rise before his usual hour to accompany him at half-past eight on a bright summer's morning

in a walk along the dusty road leading from Twickenham to Teddington.

About five minutes from the latter village, he will come to a high paling, with a row of nails along the top, above which rise laburnum, catalpa, chestnut, and other shrubbery trees. Opening a gate in this wooden wall, and passing in, he will find himself in a small garden lying in front of a two-storied house. Beds of Tom Thumb geraniums are interspersed with others of blue, white, and yellow plants; the gardener is shaving the grass-plots, crisp with morning dew, which meander between them; blackbirds and thrushes are tugging and pecking at writhing reptiles, who decline to come to the surface of the earth, save on compulsion; while the early birds, who have already had their worms, are notifying the fact in song. On the other side of a laurel hedge to the left, a hissing groom may be indistinctly seen through the leaves washing the wheels of a pony-carriage. The

house itself has nothing remarkable about it —it is an oblong, light-coloured brick building, with a slate roof, such as you see thousands of in every corner of England; but it is cheerful with large plate glass windows and flowers. The hall-door is open—let us enter. On the right is the dining-room, in which the remains of breakfast are scattered about; on the left the drawing-room, not a formal set-out-for-callers' apartment, but arranged with a view to comfort and every-day life—with chairs made to be sat upon, books meant to be read, sofas free from anti-macassars, an open piano kept in tune, and with loose music lying on the top. Before us is the staircase leading to the bed-rooms; and on one side of this runs a passage terminating in a door of coloured glass. Opening this, we find ourselves in the back-garden, which is simply a smooth gently sloping lawn, bounded on either side by hedges of sweet-briar and honeysuckle, and at the further end

by the broad sparkling Thames, for ever either rushing up to London, clear, bright, joyous, and rapid, or stealing slowly back to the country, heavy, dull, and polluted; a type of many a sanguine youth who hurries to the metropolis in pursuit of fame, fortune, or pleasure, and acquires—mud. Close to the water's edge is a boat-house, with a little sitting-room above it, which overhangs the water, and moored to the bank there floats a punt, so boarded over as to form a pier, from which you might step into your boat dry-footed at any state of tide. On the other side of the river corn-fields upon corn-fields stretch away, until they are lost in an indistinct fringe of wood.

There are three persons strolling down the lawn—Mr., Mrs., and Miss Bathurst; the two former old acquaintances, and easily recognized, though the one is stouter and the other more matronly; but the third is a new character, being a fair chubby little lady of

three years old, with blue eyes, flaxen hair, not much of a nose at present, fat cheeks, and pouting lips, as red and velvety as poppy leaves. In attendance upon the group is a large tabby cat, who now rolls over on her back, to have a game with the child, who tumbles and ruffles her in a way which no grown-up person could do with impunity; now springs into the air, and rushes off as hard as she can tear; now returns and rubs against her master's legs; now, when the party reach the river-side, erects her tail stiffly, descends a step or two of the flight leading to the little floating pier, and stands there mewing vigorously.

"No, puss," says Mrs. Bathurst, "no one is going out fishing to-day."

"Hum! I don't quite know why I should not," replied her husband. "It seems very absurd to go up to that hot, stuffy, smoky City on such a lovely day as this. I have a good mind to take a holiday."

"You have had one already this week," says the lady; "and it would hardly be fair to your partner to absent yourself again to-day."

"Oh! Skinner likes work, and is never happy unless he is buried in parchments! When I, or rather you, persuaded him to go to Ramsgate for a fortnight last year, he came back at the end of a week, saying he was miserable there; the days were so long and monotonous, that he seemed to have been away from the office a month."

"But he has only one head and one pair of hands," Mary urges; "and you told me you had rather a press of business just now."

"Hang the business!" cries William. "I have a good mind to cut it altogether. Why should I be such a slave? We have enough to live on, and I could sell my partnership for a good round sum, which would add to our income. What do you say, Louey?" he added, catching the child under the arms, and

tossing her up on his shoulder. "Shall papa stop at home in the pretty garden, or go up to ugly London every day?"

"Papa top at 'ome and pay with Louey. Take Louey in boat!"

"You see that you are in a minority, Mary —your child and your cat are both against you!"

"The cat would soon alter her opinion when her friend, the pony, had to be sold; and when Louey wants a marriage portion, she too may look upon the matter in a different light. Besides which, you yourself would not be happy if you had nothing to do. If every day were a holiday, to play would be more tedious than to work."

"Yes, it was Shakespeare who said that, to console people who were obliged to labour; but he did not believe it—no poet ever yet did."

"Well, well, the pony-carriage is ready; get your hat and gloves, you lazy man, and

Louey and I will drive you down to the station."

And so William Bathurst resigned himself with a sigh, and the cat did not dine upon fresh dace that day.

Mrs. Bathurst saw her husband safely off by the train, and then drove her little girl home again; ordered the dinner, attended to other little household matters, and finally settled down in the drawing-room, with her work and a large picture-book, out of which she was accustomed to impart such baby knowledge as the small thing seated on the footstool before her had capacity for.

The attention of Miss Louey, however, was soon called off from c-a-t, pussy, d-o-g, bow-wow, and c-o-w, moo, as, reading rather from the illustrations than the letter-press, she insisted upon calling those monosyllabic animals, by a ring at the front door, which caused her to drop the book and toddle off to the window, from which she presently cried in great excitement,

"Mamma, mamma, here's granny!"

The ten years had made a considerable difference in Mrs. Johnstone's appearance; her figure had lost its comely proportions, her hair was streaked with grey, her movements were slower, but the same kind soul and equable temper as of old beamed from her features.

"Well, Mary," she said, when the embracings were done, "I have come to spend a long day with you, so I have brought my cap, and mean to take off my bonnet and make myself comfortable."

Which she proceeded to do; and when mother and daughter were seated snugly, and grand-daughter sent to play in the garden, the following conversation took place. No—on re-consideration, I will only give extracts from it. The whole would be very improving; but as it lasted from eleven A.M. till half-past four P.M., a full detail would make this chapter rather too long; it will be better to extract

those portions which will tend in some way to illustrate the course of events, and cut out the rest.

"I am not very comfortable about your papa," said Mrs. Johnstone, in reply to some questions of her daughter's. "His health is pretty good, but he seems always restless and uneasy; he has never been the same man since he was estranged from poor Harry. It is true that they appear to be on very good terms; but it is easy to see that there is something between them, and that your papa has never forgiven him for his marriage with Minnie. And then I do not like all these new companies your father has embarked in, or the queer men who are his fellow-directors, and whom he sometimes brings down to dinner. He is not the man of business he was; I observe that his memory has become much weaker the last year or two, and I sometimes wish that the small sum he made over to you on your marriage had been given up

in another form, and not kept in his hands."

"Why, mamma, your never mean to say that papa—is—in difficulties?"

"By no means, my dear—I say nothing, because I know nothing of the sort; only I do not like this reckless speculation, and cannot help fearing at times that he may burn his fingers."

"If it ever were to be so, pray do not distress yourself about my little money. Poor papa! I am sure that would be a very minor consideration. We have quite enough for our wants, even without William's profession, with only one child, and that a daughter. If poor little John had been reared, our expenses would have been greater."

"Do not sigh, dear, it is early days yet; and if you never do have a boy, it will be no great misfortune—they are a terrible plague. But to return to what I was speaking about, never let William speculate."

"I do not think he will ever wish to do so,"

replied Mary, with a smile. "A desire to accumulate wealth is not one of his besetting sins. Poor William! he finds his law work very tedious to him, and if I said half a word he would throw it up."

"Then mind you never say it. He is not rich enough to find employment in the mere application of his income; and if he is not occupied by business, he must be by pleasure, and then you may lose your influence."

"Poor William!" repeated the young wife. "He is really very good to stick to his work, for it is not absolutely necessary, and he hates it. When did you see Harry and Minnie last?"

"On Sunday," replied Mrs. Johnstone. "They came over to spend the day, and brought their three children. It made the house quite lively once more. Do you know, I thought once that when a few years had passed, and Harry began to realize what he had given up on marrying Minnie, he would

be—not exactly regretful, but thoughtful and serious. But it is just the contrary—he is as cheerful and happy as ever he was."

"What a pity it is that papa did not make him an allowance for a few years; he might have been a solicitor, and gone into partnership with William. Poor Mr. Horace Bathurst would have been pleased, and it would have been such a good thing for all parties. His energy might have roused up William. However, it is of no use to think about what might have happened; and Harry is doing very well?"

"Oh, yes! He has a good many friends now amongst the directors of his office; and should the present secretary retire, or be superannuated, which must happen in a few years, he is pretty sure to get the vacant post."

And so they chatted about family affairs, until the afternoon was considerably advanced; and then Bob, the pony, was once more put

into the little carriage, and Mary drove her mother and daughter to the station, where Mrs. Johnstone was started off by one train, and William Bathurst received from another which came in five minutes later.

Was not this last-mentioned person one of the luckiest of men? I do not appeal to the inordinate and restless aspirer after an empire, a dukedom, or the moon, but to the sober, sagacious member of the middle classes, whose ideas of happiness are of a practical, peaceable, and genuine description; and I ask him whether he could desire anything better on this side the grave than a good business, a sufficient income independent of it, a villa on the banks of the Thames, a charming affectionate wife, a chubby, prattling daughter, and a knowing, fast-trotting pony to meet him at the station on returning from his day's work, and the certainty of a good dinner awaiting him at the end of a mile and a half's drive? For consider how many

separate ingredients have to harmonise in the mixture of this cup of bliss. A man's wife may be charming, but not affectionate; or kindly and true at heart, but querulous and inconsiderate; or his child may be sickly, and a source of anxiety rather than gladness; or his pony may be of a restless, stumbling, shying, or lethargic disposition; or his means may be straitened; or his cook one of those servants who are proverbially said to be provided by the devil for the spoilation of good meat. And, mind you, good cookery has a deal more to do with human happiness than many are inclined to admit. I pass over the mere tickling of the palate, as a very secondary consideration; but tough meat, heavy pastry, and sauces which turn acid on the stomach, are great drawbacks to the felicity of a man whose digestive organs are somewhat weakened by a sedentary occupation, whose dinner is the epoch which divides his life of labour from his life of relaxation, and who is robbed

of the holiday half of existence if that meal produces heaviness, somnolence, and uneasiness, instead of cheerfulness and contentment.

William Bathurst, then, was an exceptionally fortunate and happy man, and yet he was not perfectly satisfied. He was weary of work, and sick of deeds and parchments; he felt dissatisfied with himself for being so much under his wife's influence, as he knew that he was, gentle and unassuming though her sway might be. A certain longing for pleasure, change, and excitement, often stirred within his breast, and caused the sober joys of domesticity to appear somewhat insipid.

That week of freedom and dissipation which he had once spent often rose before his eyes in an alluring manner, and though he would have shrunk with horror from the idea of pursuing such courses *now;* though he honestly considered his wife to be the best and dearest little woman on earth, and a great deal too

good for him; though the baby prattle of his child found echoes all over the soft places of his heart, he sometimes thought that he had been married over-young, and that it would have been pleasant, before settling down for life, to spend a year or two of independent bachelorhood.

I do not mean to say that these reflections ever made Bathurst morose or peevish, they were not strong enough for that; no, he was a good, kind, affectionate husband and father, easily pleased, and happy in the happiness of those he loved; the wheat had been fostered and the tares smothered in his nature, but the evil seeds were there, and only needed favourable circumstances to break out in rank profusion.

They went home and dined, and then had their dessert laid out in the little room over the boat-house—as their custom was in summer-time—and, about seven o'clock, Bathurst dressed himself in fresh-water-sailor

costume, and took his wife and child out in a gaily-painted funny, called *La Belle Louise*, out of compliment to the little one.

They went down the stream towards Richmond, intending to come back with the tide, which turned about eight; and this arrangement made the task of rowing a very light and after-dinnerish recreation, indeed they might have floated some distance and back again without much use of the oars.

On they glided between the historical banks; past Strawberry Hill, where Horace Walpole gossiped; in front of Pope's Villa, now a Chinese pagoda sort of building, which would have brought the original house, inhabited by the poet, strongly before Mark Tapley, it is so very unlike it in every respect; by Twickenham, the home of so many literary worthies, and between the house where Louis Philippe took refuge, and that (of Ham) where the Cabal plotted; past many a pleasure-boat, with sentimental duo

or laughing and singing quartette on board; past one wherry, with but a single passenger, who was taking life luxuriously. He had piled all the cushions together at the bottom of the boat, and had so made for himself a comfortable couch, where he lay and smoked, while the waterman sculled him slowly and smoothly along. As the two boats came alongside, this Sardanapalian gentleman sat up, and, fixing his eyes on the party passing him, gave signs of awakening energy, till at last he shouted out,

"Bathurst!"

"Hulloa!" returned William, resting on his oars.

"I thought it must be you. By Jove! fancy meeting you in this way! Well, old fellow, and how have you been all these years?"

"Can it be Leeson?"

"Indeed it can. Pardon me, madam, for my rudeness—it is Bathurst's fault for not introducing me at once."

"Oh! my wife, captain, major, colonel, or —which is it by this time?"

"Major—only major."

"Major Leeson, an old friend and school-fellow, whom I have not seen for the last eleven years, and whom I thought more likely to be on the Danube than the Thames at this present moment."

Leeson raised himself on his cushions, and took off his hat; Mrs. Bathurst bowed as she fixed her eyes on the stranger, who looked rather old for her husband's contemporary. His hair was very thin above the temples, there were a great many puckers about the corners of his eyes, and his nose bore a somewhat inflamed appearance; his mouth was entirely concealed by a large thick moustache, waxed into spikey ends in the Austrian fashion, the rest of his face being clean-shaven, which was rather a pity, as a whisker on the left cheek would have shaded down the prominence of a wide bright scar which meandered

from his forehead to his chin; his figure was well-proportioned and strongly built, and bore the stamp of that ease which is imparted to the movements of the body by long and constant drill, but showed a tendency to an increase of girth about the waist rather premature in a man considerably under forty. He did not impress Mary Bathurst pleasantly; though, in spite of his scar and the slight colouring of his nose, he was handsome, though he was thoroughly well-dressed (a thing which always appeals to the female eye, let the brain behind it be ever so sensible) from hat to boots; and though any abruptness in his manner was easily accounted for by the suddenness with which the appearance of his old friend had burst upon him. There was a boldness and coarseness, however, in the expression of his features which was repulsive to her, how or why she could not tell; some people are antipathetic, and if they get over their first impression, and

become friendly, they are sure to return to their first hate and fall out some day.

"What a singular meeting this is, to be sure!" said Leeson. "I was thinking of William only this morning, and wondering what had become of him; I go down to Richmond to eat a public dinner at the 'Star and Garter,' grow sick of my company, steal away for a row on the river, and whom should I come across but the very man, and not only him, but his wife, and, eh, by Jove! what a charming little girl!—can that be your daughter? Ha! ha! ha! how funny! Excuse me, but the idea of finding Bathurst a regular paterfamilias, seems so absurd! Ah! William, you lucky dog, how I envy you your domestic happiness! I was born for that sort of thing myself, madam; Nature intended me to spend my mornings in holding skeins of worsted, my afternoons in perching about on high chairs in linendrapers' shops, with my purse in my hand, my nights in rocking the

cradle. Excuse my rattle, Mrs. Bathurst—in fact, I forgot that I was a stranger to you; it seems as if the wife of William must be an old friend. But you must have heard him speak of me—surely the name of Frederick Leeson cannot have been quite an unknown sound in your home?"

Mary now remembered that this was the name of the friend William had often spoken to her about in early days, and whose return from India had once drawn him into rebellion against his mother's authority. She knew no harm of him, and, in fact, before meeting him, had entertained rather a favourable opinion of one who, according to her husband's account, possessed so much life, spirit and energy; and she strove to cast off that feeling of repulsion which had passed through her on first coming into contact with him, and which she attributed to the peculiar dread she had of all persons under the influence of vinous excitement; it being evident, both from his manner and the thick-

ness of his speech, that the dinner at the "Star and Garter" had not been a teetotal anniversary.

"I am always glad to see my husband's friends," she said, making an effort to smile. "Will you not come home with us and take some tea?"

"Charmed, delighted! Waterman, keep alongside this gentleman's boat wherever it goes."

"The tide is turning; we will go back at once," said William Bathurst, backing water hard with his left, and pulling the boat's head round with his right. "Well," he continued, when this manœuvre was accomplished, and the two boats were once more close together, "and where are you living now, Leeson?—are you still in the Austrian service?"

"No, I have left it; it was a bad speculation; no pay to speak of, and great expenses. All armies are the same now a days; bad pay, no plunder, hard work, sickness, horrible

wounds, death, and no advantage but the privilege of wearing a smart uniform. I have beaten my sword into a ploughshare—figuratively I mean, for I believe the plough is one of the few things in which I have not got a share just now; and I am a city man, a man of business—I may say a warm man! I have discovered the philosopher's stone. But I will tell you all about that afterwards. Are you living near the river, Mrs. Bathurst?"

And the conversation kept to indifferent topics until they reached home, when Leeson paid and dismissed his waterman, saying that he would return home by train.

"A delightful little box, truly," he added, when this was settled; "I must come down and stay with you awhile, if I can find time. And where do you live in the winter?"

"Here."

"Here! You live here, all this way from London, throughout the year! Why, my dear

Mrs. Bathurst, how *do* you get through the long evenings?"

"I thought you had a keen perception of the pleasures of domestic life," said Mary, laughing.

"Ah! to be sure, you have me here," said Leeson. "I suppose it is woman's nature to like sitting at home over the fire with the cat. But how does Bathurst get on? I suppose he plays truant now and then, eh?"

"Not often; since you compel me to blow my own trumpet, Major Leeson, I must say that I do not consider myself so utterly stupid and wearisome a companion as you seem to think I must necessarily be."

"My dear Mrs. Bathurst, you mistake my meaning entirely; however charming and delightful a man's wife may be, she is still his wife, you know—he cannot forget that, can he?'

"I should hope not!"

"Well, then, remembering that she is his wife, he cannot help feeling just a leetle bit

bored now and then, can he? Oh, and it is the same with ladies—the admiration of a husband cannot have the same value as that of an impartial individual, can it?"

"The last train goes at 10.15," broke in Bathurst, anxious to interrupt a conversation which was verging upon ticklish ground. "We had better have tea at once, if you are to catch it. But perhaps you will sleep here?"

"No, thank you, I cannot to-night. I have an appointment with a man on important business to-morrow morning early. By-the-bye, I think you know him—a Mr. Johnstone of Acton, a queer, stuck-up——what on earth are you frowning and biting your lips at, Bathurst?"

"Mr. Johnstone is my father, sir," said Mary, rather severely.

"Ah!" cried Leeson, not one bit abashed. "How curious! To be sure, I remember now. And you are the little Mary Johnstone

Bathurst used to rave about when he was at old Beebees'! Well, now, that is quite a romance—just the sort of thing I can sympathise with, that is, constancy, early affection, love running smooth, and so forth. Just suit me. Tea?—thank you. When I do drink tea, I like it very strong, with a dash of green in it—yes, just that; it will be capital, I am certain!"

"Well, Bathurst, and what are you doing? You were working at the law the last time I saw you. Have you stuck to it?"

"Oh, yes!"

"That is right. You were wise not to go into the army. But the law is a slow business, unless you do some bill-discounting, or something, with it; mine is the way to make money. I told you I had found the philosopher's stone; do you wish to know what that is? Speculation, my boy, judicious speculation—that is what turns paper and parchment into gold. The tea is capital, but

I find that it never agrees with me, unless—you have not got such a thing as a drop of brandy in the house? Ah! thank you—just the smallest drop! It is time for me to be going—here is my address, Bathurst; you must come and lunch with me to-morrow, or if you are too busy, I will look you up—where is your office?"

"I beg your pardon," said Mary, as Leeson was moving off, after bidding her good night, "you said you had an appointment with my father to-morrow; is he going to engage in any speculation of a—a gambling nature?"

"Of a *gambling* nature! Oh dear no! He is going to make an enormous fortune, in the safest and most certain manner imaginable. Shares in the Spermaceti Preserve and Whale Nursery Company will be in greater estimation than Consols in five years time. But I must be off; good night."

William Bathurst was in high spirits at having met with his old friend again, and

talked of nothing else all the evening. Mary was thoughtful, and listened to him with but little heed of the meaning of what he said.

"I wonder," said he, for example, "whether Leeson has that tiger skin still?"

"I wonder?" she replied, conscious of an interrogatory sort of pause.

"Why, did you ever hear anything about it?"

"Oh! what! did you not tell me? I think some one mentioned something about a tiger once, was it not you?"

"I think not. You must know that when he was in the north-west provinces of India, he made friends with one of the native princes——"

"And was he always given to rash speculations, or should you esteem him a pretty good man of business?"

"The Indian prince? I never knew him personally."

"No, no, Major Leeson, I mean!"

"I cannot say, as it is something quite new for him to engage in mercantile affairs at all. But he is a man of the world, and sharp enough to take care of himself."

Mary sighed as she rose to light her chamber candle.

CHAPTER V.

TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND.

It was two o'clock, and Bob's was full, much fuller than the modern Restaurant which had set up in opposition in the neighbourhood. The Restaurant had mirrors, soft and comfortable chairs, roomy tables, elegantly cut glasses, snowy tablecloths and napkins, all sorts of fancy wines and liqueurs, soups, ices, delicacies without end, to lay before its customers; while Bob's could only offer the hungry guest a chop, a steak, a kidney, a potatoe, and a glass of stout. Bob's was low-ceilinged, narrow, and murky; you had to sit in a sort of pew, on a seat which was cushionless; there

were no napkins, and you had to wipe your be-portered lips with your handkerchief, which was thus made brown and unpleasant for the remainder of the day. In the corners of your box you might see where the shoulder-blades of countless generations had worn hollows in the oaken panels, or, turning round and looking at the partition at your back, you might speculate on a very curious problem, viz., whether the fact that at the place where your head rests when you lean back the varnish is all blistered, is owing to the heat and fermentation of City brains, or to some peculiar property of the human hair, or of the grease which is rubbed into it?

Why is it that the proprietor of this eating-house retires every thirty years or so with his fortune made, so that a succession of Bobs heap up riches there from generation to generation, while the Restaurant is in a state of chronic insolvency, which drives it to seek relief in the Bankruptcy Court Hospital about

every second year? The fact is that the great ambition of a Briton is to have everything the best of its kind; and the viands at Bob's, though simple, are not to be surpassed. The chops are the juiciest, the steaks the tenderest, the potatoes the most floury, and the stout!

Words fail me when I think of that divine fluid, secret spring from which wells up the national greatness; would you have fitting mottoes for Talavera, Meeanee, Balaclava?—take PORTER, COOPER, STOUT!

Now, at the restaurant you get a sodden, insipid cutlet covered with unwholesome sauce, or some other greasy mess, with no flavour which is not artificial; and you may wash this down with a *vin ordinaire* utterly unsuited to our climate for ten months of the year; sherry which tastes of British brandy, molasses, and burnt almonds; porter which is flat and flavoured with liquorice, or beer drugged with some bitter nastiness which

makes you thirsty for the rest of the afternoon. It is true that you can have champagne or moselle there; perhaps the reader will try a bottle if he is passing through the city some day. If he does, will he be kind enough to intimate the result in the second column of the *Times?*

It was two o'clock, I say, and Bobs was full—so full that William Bathurst and Major Leeson would not have been able to find seats, had not a couple of full vessels risen to go out as the empty ones came in.

"What will you have?" said Leeson, seating himself in one of the vacated places, and drawing off his lavender-coloured gloves.

"I don't know," replied Bathurst, settling down opposite; "it ought not to be much, if we are to do justice to this heavy dinner at the London Tavern at six o'clock."

"Shall we say a kidney on toast, then?

Stop, there is our chairman, Mr. Marrows, just about to order his luncheon; he is considered to be about the greediest man of the day, and as he has had the arrangement of the dinner to-night, he is sure to have provided in a manner to suit his own palate, and he will not care to cloy his appetite by too heavy a meal."

"All right," said Bathurst; "let us be guided by Mr. Marrows;" and looking in the direction indicated by his friend, he saw a tall, broad, red man, with protuberant eyes and an alarmingly short neck, who at that moment called the waiter:

"William!"

"Yessir."

"Large steak, William."

"Large steak, sir, yessir."

"And large steak to follow."

"By Jove!" cried Bathurst.

"Shall I order the same for ourselves?" asked Leeson, laughing.

"With that neck!—I declare they ought not to let him have it. But he will not eat any dinner, at all events."

"Won't he! Come, I will bet you three to one he eats as much as you and I put together this evening—you watch him."

Left to their own judgment, they ordered their luncheon, which they seasoned with talk of things in general, while they had neighbours to hear every word they said. When the room was presently thinned, however, and they found themselves alone in their box, they came to a more interesting discussion of things in particular.

"What have I been doing all these years?" said Leeson in answer to a query of his friend's. "Why, fighting, my boy, a little, drinking a good deal, making love, tol lol; gambling, perhaps, principally—every man of ours carried a pack of cards in his cartouche-box. But that sort of life is a mistake. 'Rolling stones gather no moss,' so I have

cut the service, and taken to business. Business, my dear fellow—business is the thing. At cards, you mostly have to play with men as sharp as yourself; in business, your adversary is that very simple and weak-minded person—the public."

"And how did you get that scar—from the French?"

"No, bless you! I got no scars, only wrinkles from them. They took me prisoner in a *tête-du-pont*, and sent me to Paris. The French captain who carried the work was a capital fellow, and we were great friends; so when I was sent on he gave me a letter of introduction to his brother, a man who keeps making perpetual fortunes on the Bourse, and spending them in the *coulisses*. I liked the civil brother better even than the military, and he made me useful, and that is how I became a man of business. In the course of certain transactions some shares came into into my hands which were to be got rid of on

better terms here than in France, so I came over about two months back, and as I became interested in this Whale Preservation scheme, I stopped. I often looked for you, old fellow, but never had time to take my Directory and hunt you regularly down."

"But how did you get that scar?"

"Oh, hang the scar! The fact is, as I suppose you will not be easy till I have told you all about it, that I got it in a very stupid way. I was quartered, you see, in an Italian village on a cantankerous old boy, who had a remarkably pretty daughter, who happened to get in my way after I had had my allowance. Well, I did not think any harm in trying to steal a kiss; but I am hanged if the old father did not turn rusty, and pulling my own sword out, he cut me down with it unawares, while I was still romping with the girl. Some men cannot take a joke. Poor old buffer! I am sorry that my fellows acted as they did to him—and his family."

"Did they——?"

"Yes, I am afraid they did. They thought I was killed, and—confound the scar, it is always bringing up the remembrance of that affair; and it is not altogether the pleasantest thing to think about. William, a glass of brandy."

"I am sure I am very sorry," stammered Bathurst, "to have recalled any painful reminiscence."

"Not at all, my dear fellow, not at all. I was not to blame; the old fool brought it all upon himself. If I *had* given the girl a kiss, it would not have killed her; and when—when my men acted as they did I was insensible, and did not know what was going on."

"Well," said Bathurst, anxious to turn the subject, for the manner of the other had become restless, and his eyes wore an uneasy expression quite foreign to their ordinary hardy glance, "I should never have thought that you of all men would have ever taken up with

a city life, or troubled yourself with stocks and shares."

"Aha! my boy, you don't know me yet," laughed Leeson, shaking himself, tossing off his brandy, and so breaking from the memory of the past; "I am a universal genius, with a talent for everything in general, and prospectusses in particular. Do you know, Bathurst, it bothers me to think how you can have been living here, in the heart of the whole commercial world, for so many years without discovering the absurdly easy answer to the riddle, *how to make money?*"

"Come, I flatter myself that I do know something about that. My business, though it certainly is not quite what it was in my uncle's palmiest time, brings me in six hundred a year for my share."

"Six hundred a year! Why, man, you ought to be making more than that every afternoon."

"And I get five per cent on my capital."

"Five per cent! You mean to sit there and tell me that you only get five per cent. on real hard cash! Oh! it is wicked. With all the extravagance which people have imputed to me, I have never been able to bear waste, and five per cent. makes me feel perfectly indignant. Teufel! if I had the use of your capital, I would be worth a million in five years."

Bathurst had always had a strange belief in the speaker, and the faith of former years clung to him still. It is strange to see the force of these early impressions; the boy who was cock of the school, in the eleven, or captain of the eight in our boyish days, often receives an undue deference to his opinions on religion, politics, or conduct, from those whose judgment is much clearer than his own.

And so it was that Leeson's present talk did not appear to be the reckless, bombastic babble which Bathurst would have considered it if issuing from any other lips, but, making

of course some allowance for poetical adornment, he took it all in seriously.

"And what is this royal road to fortune, which it is so easy and pleasant to tread?" said he.

"Buying shares at a discount, and selling them at a premium, to be sure."

"Hum," said Bathurst, considering, "I have heard of that kind of thing before; but it seems to me that in these operations *someone* must buy at a premium and sell at a discount."

"Exactly, and the thing is to contrive that 'someone' shall be someone else."

"To do which, one ought to be sharper and better informed than the entire Stock Exchange."

"Ah! that Stock Exchange—if I were only a member of it! That commission eats up one's profits terribly. Not so bad as the turf certainly, egad! They charge five per cent. commission for agency there, but I can

get made a member of Tattersalls and save that. As to being sharper than one's fellow-creatures, I hate bragging, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and I have gained at least five hundred pounds since I have been in England."

"And are you certain you will not lose it all back again?"

"Certain."

"What makes you so confident?"

"I have spent it."

"Extravagant individual!"

"Extravagant? Not at all. I had to engage and furnish rooms, pay the first quarter in advance, stock my cellar, buy horses, a brougham, et cetera, et cetera; and for all these things I was obliged to pay ready money in order to establish my credit, and acquire the respectability necessary to a man of business and a director. Besides, I have had hardships enough in the course of the last few years, and must enjoy myself a little

while in peace and plenty. And I can afford it, my boy; this present company which I have started is a mine of wealth; you must really take some shares, I should be quite vexed if you missed this opportunity of making your fortune. I am proud to say that I originated the idea of the Spermaceti Preserve and Whale Company myself."

"And do you think it will be a real *bonâ fide* paying affair in the end?"

"In the end! Well, really I have never thought much about the end, the beginning is the principal thing, and if we can make a pot of money out of the affair, and then drop it, what does it matter whether it comes to anything afterwards? Ah! Bathurst, you are not up to these things; you have neglected your time and opportunities sadly; but never mind, put yourself under my guidance for a few months, and we will soon make up lee-way. But perhaps you like the law work for its own

sake—if so, it is different, a man can but be amused."

"Like law work! I detest and abominate it!" cried Bathurst in a tone of deep sincerity.

"Then I must, with every apology, answer you as Abernethy did the patient who complained of the agony he felt whenever he stretched out his arm, 'What a fool you must be to do it!'" said Leeson.

"Well, so I have sometimes thought—and yet I do not know. You see I have an established business, which is worth a certain regular income, which it would be a pity to relinquish."

"Sell it!"

"I have thought of that too, but I have a partner who is in a very delicate state of health; and though he does his work, still he knows well that his life is not worth a year's purchase; now it would not be fair to throw the trouble and anxiety of forming new con-

nections, and entering upon fresh engagements, upon a man who has been a good stanch friend to me, and my uncle before me, at a time when he may have to take to his death-bed any week. He has only got one lung left, the doctors say."

"Poor fellow! Well, I suppose you could not exactly cut yourself adrift from an old mate with only one lung—that would be rather dirty. But I will tell you what we can do for you—we can put you into a more amusing style of business than you have at present. The 'Whale Nursery' wants a solicitor, and you shall fill the post; two guineas for each attendance at the Board, your own charges for legal expenses, &c. Then I think you might be appointed to the 'Double-eyed Needle Company,' the 'Patent Self-adjusting Braces Company,' and several others, and you can gradually drop your old hum-drum connection."

"Ay!" said Bathurst, hesitatingly, "that

would be all very well for a single man, just beginning life, but I have a wife and a child, and——"

"I know! I know!" interrupted Leeson. "You mean to say that your hen pecks you, poor old cock! Now, I can sympathise with you, for Mrs. Leeson used to treat me in a similar manner."

"What!" cried Bathurst, in astonishment. "Are you married?"

"What are you so surprised about? Do you suppose that you only have the right to wear the rosy hand-cuffs; or that there are no fair damsels or crummy widows in Germany or Italy willing to bestow their hearts and purses upon handsome young men of the military profession?"

"I can imagine all that easily enough," said Bathurst, laughing. "My surprise was not that you should be able to find a wife, but that you should be willing to marry her when found."

"We all have our weak moments," sighed Leeson; "and besides, I was hard up, and she had a little of the ready, which saved me from a deuce of a mess just then."

"And is Mrs. Leeson in England?"

"The Fates forbid!"

"You don't mean to say that you have had the misfortune to—to lose her?"

"No, she has had the misfortune to lose me! She is blessed with a great spirit, is my better half, and she only gave me a choice of three courses to pursue—utter submission, desertion, or cruelty; avoiding extremes, I have chosen the middle way."

"You take things easily—what a fellow you are!"

"I simply do what seems best at the moment, without looking much before or behind me—that is all. But to return to your affairs; it is quite right that you should have every consideration for Mrs. Bathurst in all domestic matters, that you should not smoke

in the drawing-room, that you should have a little bed in your dressing-room to sleep in when you come home tight, that you should not bring more than two friends home to dinner without giving her previous notice, and so on. But in all matters of business take your own course; women know nothing of business. If you dislike grinding at the law, give it up. That is not a question to consult your wife about—what does it matter to her?"

"Why, if her husband's income were diminished by the act, it would surely matter a good deal to her."

"Ay, ay, but that is such a large 'if;' why, my dear fellow, with the exercise of decent intelligence, you ought to quadruple your annual receipts at the very least. But we will talk of that after you have heard all about this spec at dinner this evening. What are you going to do till then?"

"I have no engagement in particular. Do

you remember that years ago you began to give me lessons in billiards?"

"To be sure I do. How have you got on since then?"

"Very little; I hardly ever play—not above a couple of games in a month, I should say. Suppose we have one now."

There *was* business of some importance to be attended to at Bathurst's office; but he felt a stronger disinclination to work than usual that afternoon, with the public dinner in prospect, Leeson by his side, and so many new projects fermenting in his brain. So he left the interest of his clients to the care of his partner and clerks, to be cared for or neglected as fate might direct, and went off to play at billiards.

He had a great natural aptitude for the game, and since Leeson had first initiated him in the mysteries of it, had never quite given it up; so that he was a much greater proficient in the art of making cannons and

hazards than he had been ten years before; but he was no match for his opponent, who gave him more and more points every game, but almost invariably succeeded in bearing off the half-crown which depended on the victory. Not that they played many games altogether, for at five o'clock they left off and proceeded to Leeson's chambers, to which address Mrs. Bathurst had that morning forwarded a carpet-bag containing her husband's evening things, to dress for dinner. For Bathurst was not playing truant—his wife knew all about the dinner, and had not, either by voice or manner, expressed the slightest repugnance to his attending it. On the contrary, had he shown any signs of not wishing to go, she would have urged him to do so. She did not anticipate any danger—how should she? She was ignorant of Leeson's influence over her husband, and was confident in her own; as for fearing lest he should be drawn into any wild speculations himself, the idea never oc-

curred to her, so utterly uncongenial to his quiet, unenterprising disposition did gambling ventures seem. So, knowing that her father was a director of the company which was to dine at the London Tavern that day, and wishing to discover whether the affairs he was engaged in were of that ruinous and bubble nature which her mother feared and suspected, she was glad of the opportunity which presented itself for William's seeing and judging of the nature and character of Mr. Johnstone's schemes and associates for himself.

And that opportunity proved to be a fine one, for Bathurst was seated between a stockbroker and a general agent, with his father-in-law immediately opposite to him, and thirty more "city men" on either side, all of whom talked shop, shop, and nothing but shop, from the egg to the apple.

Mr. Johnstone seemed more surprised than pleased to see him there.

"Ah! William," he exclaimed, "have you, then, embarked in our enterprise?"

"Not exactly," replied Bathurst; "but I am a candidate for the office of looking after your legal interests, in case you should think it necessary to have a second firm in your employment. You will require an immense amount of law—first to secure your privileges, and then to keep them."

"I do not see that, sir," said the general agent; "it seems to me that, with a small party on the shores of the bay, and two armed vessels cruising during the open season off its mouth, we shall be able to protect our interests without much help from the lawyers."

"Armed ships are all very well," said Bathurst, who, having heard hardly anything about the company or its objects, spoke very much at random; "but the strong arm of the law is better. Depend upon it, there is nothing like leather."

The general agent, who had his own private

reasons for suspecting a sly poke in the remark, turned round, looked hard at Bathurst, and grinned.

"Ha! good!" said he. "A glass of wine?"

When the dinner was over, and the wine had circulated once or twice, the gentleman who sat at the head of the table—the identical man who had eaten the two large steaks for lunch, and whose appetite, by the bye, had not been in any way blunted by the feat—rose, and proposed as a toast, "Prosperity to the Spermaceti Preserve and Whale Nursery Company," and from his speech Bathurst made out something about the proposed objects of the association.

"The increasing scarcity of whales every year is a common subject of regret to the general public, and consternation among the hardy sailors who pursue the ocean monster through the depths of the North Sea," he said. "Now, to what is this owing? What would

happen if our landed gentry were to give up preserving game? Why, the gradual extinction of partridges, pheasants, and hares. Why has the salmon, once the cheapest, become the most expensive fish in England, and what are the steps which are being taken by energetic men to check the evil? Why—preservation. Now, I confidently appeal to you whether blubber is not of as much importance as salmon cutlets? Of course it is; then why not preserve our whales? On the inhospitable shores of Nordland and Finmark, are numerous fiords, into which the maternal whale with her tender offspring may be driven, and where the sportive fish may be brought up in safety from—from the impetuous swordfish and destructive flapper, until the time arrives when, by their age and bulk, they are fitted for the harpoon. Some of these fiords it is the object of the company to adapt to this purpose. I will not enter into details as to how the whales are to be driven or enticed into

the preserves, or by what means they are to be kept there; all that, as well as the arrangements which have been made with the principal merchants interested in the whaling trade, and with the countries whose shores will be the scenes of our enterprise, will be fully entered into in the forthcoming prospectus."

"Well, what do you think of it?" inquired Leeson, when the speaker had sat down; for the company, moving their chairs back from the table, had broken into little coteries, and Leeson had come round to Bathurst's side.

"I do not know," replied the latter. "Surely the first arrangements will cost a deal of money?"

"Money!" cried the stock-broker, who overheard him—"money! What is money? Why, money is a drug, sir—a drug! The City is crammed, surfeited with money; the only difficulty is how to employ it."

Bathurst opened his eyes and kept his mouth shut; such an extraordinary state of affairs completely flabbergasted him. Why did not the glutted millionnaires retire from the field, and allow the hungry paupers to come in and have a turn at making *their* fortunes? This thought was, however, but a passing shadow—when it was gone Bathurst felt dazzled and humiliated. There is nothing more distressing to a man of weak mind than to find himself in the company of those who treat the objects of his ambition as trifling matters not worth turning aside for, who speak of the heroes whom he worships as of commonplace charlatans, or who show a scornful lack of reverence for sums of money which he has hitherto considered as enormous; and Bathurst felt as if he belonged to an inferior order of animals when he heard all around him talking of their tens and hundreds of thousands with the indifference of the Stock Exchange. After a little while, however, his

naturally buoyant temperament, combined with the wine he had swallowed, enabled him to float up to the level of his company, and he began to fancy himself a millionnaire, so that at last it gave him a pang when a reference to his watch showed him that the hour of illusion was past, and that he must return to reality."

"You are not going already ?" cried Leeson, when he saw his friend moving.

"I must, really; it is half-past eleven, and the last train leaves Waterloo at twelve."

"All right; wait a moment and I will go to the station with you; I want a smoke consumedly."

Bathurst was pleased at the favourable impression he seemed to have made on the company, many of whom pressed round to shake his hand and express a hope of seeing more of him; his progress to the door was quite a little ovation.

"Well, then," said Leeson, as they stood on the platform; "how many—a thousand did you say?"

"No, no; I will not have more than a hundred."

"Very good. They are five pound shares, you know—one pound to be paid; if they go up to fifty per cent. premium you can only win fifty pounds at that rate."

"Take your seats, please, gentlemen, take your seats!" cried a guard, and a bell began to ring vigorously.

"Good night!" cried Bathurst, jumping into a carriage.

"Good night, old fellow!" replied the other, turning to walk away.

"I say," called Bathurst from the window.

And Leeson turned back.

"Shall I see you to-morrow?"

"Most likely."

"Well, in case I should not, you know, look here—make it a thousand!"

When Bathurst got home, he found his wife sitting up to let him in.

"Well," she said eagerly, when he had fastened up the front door, and with that perversity which makes one feel disinclined to go to bed at once on coming home late, had turned aside into the dining-room, "did you see papa?"

"Yes; he went off in time to catch the eleven train, though."

"And does he seem to be bound up seriously with this speculation?"

"Yes, I should say, from all I heard, that he was one of the principal promoters of it."

"And is it a safe concern, do you think?"

"Safe!—safe as houses, my dear. Why, the shairman—chairman, I mean, eats two beefshtakes for luncheon, without spoiling his dinner. It is not speculation, it's investment—investment, that is what it is."

"I am glad to hear you say so; it has taken quite a weight off my mind. But you

are tired, and I will not tease you anymore to-night—you shall tell me all about it to-morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

A WIFE'S FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE CLOVEN FOOT.

PARDON the triteness of the remark, but it is really a very awful thing to have been born. I suppose there is hardly a human being, however thoughtless or reckless, to whom that idea has not occurred at some time or another; to most of us it is a familiar subject of consideration. Then why write it down here? Because, while I was considering William Bathurst's position at this period of his life just now, the fact came home to me, not like the existence of a country called Timbuctoo, or the number of miles the moon is distant from the earth, but as a personal

practical truth. You are born and reared without having any voice in the matter, it is true, but from the moment you become a walking, talking, sentient animal, you *can* help almost everything you do; you have the choice of acting rightly or wrongly every minute; and when you prefer the latter, you are responsible for it, and will some day, in some way or other, suffer for the choice. If a child steals a lump of sugar, he will find it more difficult afterwards to fight against dishonesty; if he allows passion its head, he will find the beast's mouth harder, and his own arm weaker next time; if he shrinks from peril, his cowardice will increase. When the coroner's inquest brings in a verdict of temporary insanity upon the suicide, we all say—"Poor fellow! he could not help it." But could he not? No, not at the time, perhaps, but could he not have helped giving way to that fit of sulks five, ten, fifteen, twenty years ago? And all those increasing

outbursts of temper, did he fight them fairly, or strike his colours with greater and greater pusillanimity every time?

Committed theft has he? Poor fellow! —the most honest man in the world—well off—no necessity for the act—he was not responsible for it—a mere attack of kleptomania; was there not a time when the temptation to *take* might have been resisted, ay, and with ease? The drunkard! Has a craving, has he, which it is almost impossible to resist? Had he that always?—was he born with it? I tell you, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, he *forced* himself to drink to excess in the first instance; his gorge rose at the extra glass, Nature stood up against him and wrestled to prevent his swallowing it; but he thought intoxication was manly, or he had imbibed from anacreontic poetry romantic ideas of the pleasure attached to it, or he was curious to try a new sensation, and so he wilfully forced himself

through the vicious portals, and at *that* moment at least was responsible for the loss of power to resist the poison when at a later period he was dying of it.

It is a fearful thing to Be—every weakness, every failing, every sin of omission as of commission, is our own fault; we could not help committing it at the moment, perhaps, but we could have helped committing some other sin years before, and a series of subsequent sins in the interim, which incapacitated us from resisting at the last. Is not the governor who neglects the defence of the outposts responsible for the loss of the citadel? Is not the man who fires the fusee the one who blows up the magazine, what matter whether that fusee smoulder for five minutes, an hour, a month, a year, a decade, a century? And therefore I say that William Bathurst was himself in a great measure to blame for the weakness of his character. It is true that he was born with a yielding dis-

position; it is true, also, that an injudicious education had tended to foster rather than discourage the evil; but nevertheless it is also true that unless he had in thousands of little matters given way when his conscience told him to make a stand which he might have made with ease with a slight amount of trouble and self-denial, from which, however, he wilfully shrank, he would never have fallen into habits of vicious indulgence without a harder struggle against his fate, nor succumbed so speedily and utterly to the influence of a man whose walk in life was not, he well knew, along the paths of virtue. For Leeson once more, and without an effort, resumed his old empire over him; and the home pleasures, which had hitherto seemed so delightful, grew tame; his wife's company became rather a bore, and the prattle of his child wearisome. But for some time he concealed this encroaching change in his feelings and desires; for Mary's natural influence over him was second

only to Leeson's, and the struggle between the two would have been pretty equal had she known of its existence, and so made any efforts to secure the victory.

But Mary's was a fine disposition—open, honest, ingenuous, unsuspicious. She knew nothing of Leeson's character, nor of the influence which he had exerted over William years before, during his mother's lifetime; she attributed his absence from home on that occasion to some resistance on his part to the maternal rule, and thought him in a measure justified in endeavouring to place some limit to the despotism under which he lived. She little dreamed that this newly-found friend had been the cause of a course of action so contrary to the general tenor of William's conduct, or of the pranks they had played during the time she had thought him studying so hard at the law. It is true that the unfavourable impression she had conceived of Leeson on their first meeting had by no means

been removed by several subsequent interviews; but though he was not a "lady's man," he might be a pleasant companion when alone with men; or, if there was anything wrong about him, her husband would be sure to find out that he was no longer the same honest lad that she assumed him to have been in their schooldays, and would then not only drop his acquaintance, but warn her father against his machinations. For, strange to say, Mary Bathurst, who knew nothing whatever about Stocks, Shares, Speculations, or Investments, had divined the truth by sheer feminine instinct; and without knowing why, would have urged anyone she cared for to keep clear of all money transactions with the unknown Major. However, her husband was a lawyer, and therefore, as she supposed, proof against fraud or deceit of any commercial kind; so that she hoped that her father was safe for the present, and for his protection was rather glad than otherwise of the intimacy between

William and his dangerous friend. For Leeson, entirely occupied by a multitude of bubble speculations, had apparently fallen somewhat into the habits of a man of business; and though his society was perilous to his friend's fortune, and calculated to undermine his principles of integrity, it did not for the first few months draw him into any habits calculated to alarm his wife. It is true that William dined in town occasionally and returned by the last train, and that he was not quite so domestic as he had been; but Mary thought that want of manliness was a defect in his character, and was rather pleased that he should mix more than he had hitherto done with those of his own sex.

It was not till the March succeeding Leeson's re-appearance that the unsuspicious nature of Mary was aroused to some slight sense of the danger her husband was incurring. He had intimated, on going up to town one morning, that he should not be back to dinner; and

so she took that meal early with her little girl, as it was her custom to do on these occasions, first, because, like too many ladies, she in her heart preferred dining in the middle of the day; then it gave less work to the servants; and, finally, she found that tea and supper made a better division of the exceptionally long day. For she did not go to bed till he came in; not that she wished to put any check upon him, still less had she any idea of conveying a reproach by her vigilance, but she liked sitting up with a book after the house was quiet, and enjoyed a little bit of social chat about the events of the day when her husband came in.

She was sitting as usual, then, on this particular evening, reading a novel by the fire, and, owing to the comfort of the chair, or the warmth of the evening, or the drowsy nature of the story, she fell asleep. She was awakened by the cat jumping up on her lap, and found the fire out, and the moderator

very low for want of having the oil pumped up. Starting up, and so summarily ejecting poor pussy, she turned the winder several times round, and so restored the light and looked at her watch. It was half-past three; upwards of two hours and a half since the arrival of the last train, for William had always been in the house by one. What could be the matter?—An accident? Pooh! nonsense, he had missed the train; but even so he had had plenty of time to come home by cab. When they had gone to the opera on one occasion, and, the performance being protracted beyond midnight, had not been able to catch the last train, they had returned in a four-wheeler, drawn by a lame horse, and yet had reached Teddington by two. Perhaps the train had been smashed, perhaps he had been garotted, perhaps—but the most probable solution was that, finding himself late, he had got a bed in town.

Mary Bathurst was as sensible as most

people; but the least nervous person is apt to conjure up imaginary evils in the stillness of the night, especially on awaking suddenly out of a deep sleep. However, she made an effort to shake off all sombre fancies, and taking the most probable solution of her husband's absence, instead of a remotely possible one, determined to go to bed at once. But just as she had lit the candle, she thought she heard wheels—she listened, the thought became a certainty; the noise grew louder, approached, and finally stopped opposite the garden gate.

Then she distinguished the crunching of men's footsteps on the gravel, and the sound of voices in front of the house. Wondering why William did not come in at once, she opened the hall door gently and looked out. Her husband was clinging to the arm of the cabman, who was supporting him with some difficulty up to the house.

"Oh! what is the matter, cabman?" cried

Mary in alarm. "Is he much hurt?"

"Hurt! lor bless yer, marm, he's only a bit cut!"

"Cut! Oh! where? Is it dangerous?"

"I'm a'right," cried Bathurst.

"Dangerous!" repeated the cabman, "I never heerd tell of any danger coming from *his* complaint."

"But you said he was cut."

"Why, I'm blowed if she knows English," said the man, with a laugh. "When I say he's *cut*, I mean sprung."

"Sprung?"

"Well, then, screwed. But I can't stop here all night a-teaching you the languidge. Come, master, are you going to pay me my fare or not?"

"I'm nor going to pay a'thing; I've gor no money. How should a f'ler have any money when anosher f'ler turnt up three naterall running—eh? How should a f'ler, I say——"

A sudden light broke in upon Mary—her

husband, the father of her child, was—*drunk*!

"What is your fare, cabman?" she said, her voice at once regaining its firmness.

"Ten bob, marm," said the fellow, boldly; and then, seeing that she put her hand into her pocket without demur, he added, "and 'arf-a-crown for the pikes. And it's a long way, and I've took a sight of care of the gen'elman."

Mary satisfied him, and with some difficulty got her husband into the house, and when he had reeled into an arm-chair in the dining-room, she returned and secured the hall door, and then came back and contemplated her disguised spouse. Disguised!—that is the best because the most expressive of all the slang terms which are used, half in shame, half as words of endearment, to throw a decent sort of mist around intoxication. The bashful, the neat, the respectable William was indeed disguised. His hair was all ragged and towzled; his eyes, usually so timid and

vacillating, were fixed and sparkling; his face was red and swollen, his neckcloth untied, his waistcoat unbuttoned, the bosom of his shirt all rumpled and wine-stained, and the wristbands unfastened.

"I'm ar-right!" he asserted, vehemently—"I know where am, though ridsh cabsh makesh f'ler rath giddy. Thish my own house? Englishman's housh is hish cartle. You shee I mished train—but whatsh th' odds?—but whatsh the—odds, I shay? You're my wife—I'm not your wife—no; and nor a-going tubenpecked erry longer. I shay, shing something.

'He that drinks strong beer an' goes to bed mellow,
He that drinks strong beer an' goes to bed mellow,
Lives as he orderdo, lives as he orderdo,
Lives as he orderdo-o-o-o, and dies a jolly fellow!'

Chorus, Mary!

'Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl
Till it does——'"

"William! William!" cried the wife, "do

be quiet. You will rouse the house, and I would not have the servants know the state you are in for worlds."

"Blow the house and the shervants! I'm nor ashamed o' myself. No. Join the chorus, intoxicated female!

> 'For to-night we'll merry be,
> For to-night we'll merry be,
> For to-night we'll merry be-e-e-e—
> To-morrow we'll be so—ber!'"

"William, I say, William, you will disturb the child—you will wake Louey."

"Ah! so I shall, so I shall; poor innoshent offshpring of a cruel father and an intoxicated mother, who keeps turning round and round the room; did its unnasheral parent dishturb its peashful shlumbers? Oh! what a wretch I am!—what a monshter! I have killed my only child—my pretty little Louey! Oh! oh! hi! hi! hi!"

And he broke into maudlin weeping, to the renewed surprise and alarm of Mary, who had

never seen a drunken man before, and wondered with apprehension what his next fancy would be. One thing was quite evident to her, namely, that the sooner he got to bed and to sleep the better it would be for all parties, and she took advantage of his softer mood to urge the desirability of such a proceeding; and would probably have succeeded at once, had she not unfortunately hit on a wrong chord.

"Come," she said, "let us go to bed, it is late, and as you have to get up early——"

"And why should I ged ub early? To go to the office, I suppose. D— the office! D'ye hear that? D— the office! I have been a shlave long 'nough to th' law. I'm gorm to make my fortune, 'joy mysel'. Let's have suffintorink."

In spite, however, of a short paroxysm of violence caused by the refusal, Mary was firm in the denial of the latter request, and, by dint of mingled scolding and coaxing, got

him at last up to bed, where he soon fell into the heavy stertorous slumber of partial apoplexy. At about five o'clock in the morning, however, she was aroused by his groaning, and found him sitting up in a miserable plight. With her inexperience in such matters, she fancied him to be very ill, and forgot her indignation in the desire to alleviate his sufferings. He was sober, penitent, and docile enough now; and in the intervals of the more violent efforts made by his system to avoid absorbing the unaccustomed deluge of deleterious beverages which had been poured into his stomach, ranging from sugar-of-leaded champagne to British brandy, expressed his sorrow for the excess which produced such unpleasant consequences, his indignation against the companions who had forced him to swallow more than, at the time, he was aware of, his solemn determination to be more on his guard for the future, and his firm conviction that his speedy dissolution was at

hand unless a cup of tea could be procured forthwith.

In all these assertions Mary placed implicit faith, the last not excepted. But how was the requisite cup of tea to be obtained? At brewing that beverage, indeed, she flattered herself that she was an adept, but hot water was a requisite ingredient, and that could not be obtained without a fire, the way to get which was almost as great a mystery to her as if Prometheus had never visited the earth. She knew that there were coals and wood and paper somewhere in the house, but how these materials were to be placed in relation to each other in the grate, she had no idea. The readiest method of solving the difficulty would have been to call one of the servants, but such an act would have published her husband's indiscretion to the entire parish, and she determined not to have recourse to such an extreme measure unless he showed signs of becoming blue or losing conscious-

ness. Suddenly a bright thought struck her, and tearing the ornament from the fireplace in the bed-room, she saw that the fire was ready laid behind it. With all her want of experience, she found no difficulty in applying a light to the paper at the bottom of the grate, and when the flame was crackling cheerfully, she put on her dressing-gown and slippers, threw a shawl over her shoulders, and taking a candle in her hand, prepared to descend in search of the necessary materials for her act of conjugal charity.

It was rather awful moving about her own house in that stealthy way at that dead stilly hour of the night; the pictures, the cloaks, and umbrellas, all the little familiar objects about the house, had a queer, unaccustomed look, as if they were the same things she knew, only *dead.* The hall clock ticked with such earnest throbs that she half fancied it was following her about. She felt like a ghost, or a burglar, or a poisoner;

and at her most nervous moment something rubbed up against her legs. She would have shrieked had not a sudden sound like that of a distant threshing-machine sprung up at her feet, and revealed the cat, who, evidently thinking that his mistress had got up, and was moving about the house, expressly for his diversion, testified his gratitude for the delicate attention by following her closely wherever she went, rubbing up against her and purring with infinite contentment; and, to tell the truth, she was glad of his companionship, and, indeed, when she came to enter the kitchen for the kettle, of his protection. For sudden entrance for the first time into a kitchen at night is very similar to the first glimpse one has of a drop of Thames water in a microscope; and in either instance the effect is appalling.

But Tom thought black beetles great fun, and patting some half-dozen to death in his graceful and playful way, put the rest to

flight; and as they vanished in a thousand mysterious and invisible cracks, his mistress summoned courage to approach the boiler. Then she visited the larder, in reality for milk, but, as the cat thought, to draw that likely cover for a mouse, an act of consideration of which he availed himself by at once running into a fine specimen of that species of game. Finally, all the necessary articles were collected and carried upstairs, the water soon boiled, the tea was made; and when Bathurst had drunk it, he got better, and went to bed and to sleep again; and then Mary solaced herself with a cup, and gave Tom some milk in a saucer.

It was very late in the day when William Bathurst made his appearance, with a pale face, red eyelids, a splitting headache, and a demeanour generally abject. But not even by her manner did his wife reproach him; she thought that he had been sufficiently punished for an inadvertent excess, of which,

she felt confident, he would never again be guilty. It did not seem possible to her that any reasoning being would subject himself voluntarily a second time to so much degradation and discomfort.

So she even forbore to say anything sarcastic when he hesitatingly suggested that there must have been something wrong about "those mushrooms."

He did not make any attempt at going to town, or at eating any dinner, but had a basin of soup in the middle of the day, and managed to make a meal off tea and toast in the evening —a comfortable, sociable, and domestic repast, taken in concert with his wife, child, and cat. But his manner was very constrained and awkward, and the whole family were perplexed by the unaccustomed gravity, poorly disguised by forced laughter, of his demeanour. Pussy concluded that he had been foiled in the attempt to capture a mouse —Louey accounted for everything by con-

sidering that "poor papa was vewy poorly;" and Mary thought he was ashamed of himself. But, in reality, he was wondering what his wife would say when she came to know of a step which he had determined to take, and which he now half regretted.

CHAPTER VII.

THREE LETTERS.

ALWAYS glad of an excuse for keeping away from his office, William Bathurst was now affected by a sevenfold desire to put off the moment of making his appearance in the City; for when he did so, he would probably have to undergo an ordeal to him more dreadful than a competitive examination, or the extraction of a tooth—he would have *to make up his mind!*

And so he declared himself still on the sick-list on the following day, and persisted in remaining at home; and the eleven o'clock post brought him two letters, which he

strolled down to the bottom of the garden to peruse in solitude. One of them was in the well-known hand of his chief clerk, so he opened that first.

"DEAR SIR,—

"As neither you nor Mr. Skinner came to the office yesterday, I am rather at a loss to know what steps to take *in re* 'Codger and Brown.' Mr. Keen, whom you brought in yesterday, telling me to give him every facility for investigating the amount of *bonâ fide* business done by the firm, recommends an appeal. Shall I follow his advice; and how far does his authority extend? He received the visits of several clients yesterday afternoon in the private room. Probably this letter will be rendered useless by your coming to the office; but I write in case you should be detained for a longer period than I anticipate. Mr. Skinner is, I fear, too unwell to come. "Yours, &c., &c.

"____ ____"

The writing of the second was unfamiliar, and it ran thus :

"Dear Sir,—

"I write to you as the friend and partner of Mr. Skinner, to inform you that the break-up of his system, which I have for some time anticipated, and endeavoured to ward off, has come at last. That this is the final attack, I feel very little doubt ; and do not expect that he will ever be able to attend to business again. Indeed, if you wish to see him again in this world, I should recommend you not to defer the visit. His sister, Miss Skinner, is with him.

"Yours, &c,

"George Bisindie, M.D."

"Poor Skinner!" said Bathurst to himself. "I have treated him very badly. I ought to have gone to see him before this. Well, I should have gone the other day, only I met

Leeson, and he carried me off almost by force in another direction. It must be owned, though, that he could not have died at a more opportune time, for his death just now will simplify matters wonderfully."

And so, thinking words which would have shocked him intensely had anyone uttered them, he went back to the house, and wrote this letter—the third with which the reader was threatened at the beginning of the chapter.

"Dear Keen,—I hear from my clerk that you have already received one or two clients as a member of the firm; pray continue to do so, and conduct the business according to the best of your judgment, showing Nibbs this as your authority. In fact, I look upon the business pretty well as already yours, for you must have by this time discovered that it is what I represented it, and poor Skinner's approaching death will remove the last obstacle

from the completion of our bargain. For my part, I am as anxious to be quit of the whole affair as you are to engage in it, and I shall not feel free until the use of my name on the door, where, according to agreement, it is to remain for a year after I have nothing to do with the business, is my only connexion with the law."

Having finished the letter, Bathurst sought out his wife and showed her the note he had received from the doctor, pointing out Skinner's precarious state.

"You must go and see him at once," said Mary decidedly.

"Yes, I suppose I must," replied Bathurst with a sigh, for he hated sickness and death, and everything that was gloomy and tended to make him feel uncomfortable. But Skinner had been a faithful servant to his uncle and a good friend to himself for many years; he had had the lion's share of the work, but not of the profits, and had devoted his whole life

and all his energies and talents to keeping together and increasing that business which Bathurst himself was so anxious to get rid of. The thought smote him reproachfully, and by no means detracted from the discomfort he felt in his present visit. There was one consolation—Skinner was a bachelor; there was no wife or child to make a distressing scene, only it seemed this single sister, who would probably inherit her brother's little property, and bear his loss with resignation, especially as she could not have seen very much of him of late years—for Bathurst, who had often been to his partner's house, had never met her.

To reach the dying man's residence, Bathurst had to go through London, so he called upon Leeson on his way, to explain matters and point out that he might be engaged in settling his partner's affairs and making preparations for the funeral, &c., for the next few days. He half expected that his friend

would ridicule the idea of his establishing himself as head-nurse, and urge some party of pleasure as a more desirable way of passing his time, and he was summoning up what little resolution he had in his composition to resist the tempter, when Leeson spared him the trouble.

"You are quite right, old fellow," said he; "never desert a mate when he is down on his luck or dying, or how can you expect others to stick to you in similar circumstances? If ever I suffer the extreme penalty of the law, I shall expect you to accompany me to the drop; I am sure I would do as much for you. More than that, if ever you have an attack of D. T. I'll nurse you."

"Thank you," laughed Bathurst. "Of the two evils, I had sooner have recourse to your services in the last instance."

"Well, I don't know," said the other; "I have had the complaint, and my friends told me that I was very trying. One suffers a good

deal in D. T., depend upon it. As for the chokey business, I have a presentiment that, if ever I am hung, you will swing at the same time, for I am not likely to commit murder; and if I get into such a scrape, it will be through my old Austrian duelling propensities. Now, if I quarrel and fight, you are safe to be my second, and a British jury would hang both principal and second if the former killed his man, which I should be certain to do. However, we will not anticipate. By-the-bye, before you go, I must warn you not to neglect those Plinlimmons in your absence; they are at two and a half discount, and if they have not recovered by to-morrow, you may like to sell."

"And so lose some hundreds."

"Well, they may fall lower, and then it will be thousands."

"What do you mean to do?"

"I think I shall hold on; your father-in-law means to do so, for I fancy that they will

recover to-morrow or the next day; and if they do get back to par, or even to a half-discount, I shall sell at once, for I own I don't like them."

"Well, I will put my shares entirely into your hands—deal with them just as you do with your own."

"Hum!" said Leeson; "it is rather a responsibility—you must not blame me if it goes wrong."

"My dear fellow, that *would* be unreasonable," cried Bathurst; "especially after what I won the other day by your advice."

And so they parted; and William Bathurst soon arrived at the residence of Mr. Skinner. The sick man was very near his end, frightfully emaciated, and fighting hard for breath; and when Bathurst had been with him a quarter of an hour, his better nature came out—he forgot himself, and only regretted that he had not reached the bedside earlier. For the dying lawyer seemed to be happier when he

had some one with him who formed a connecting link between his helpless, wasted frame and the office where his mind still hovered; and nothing distracted his attention from his bodily sufferings so well as to hear from his partner's lips what had been the decision in this will case, or how that action was getting on. What a pang it would have been to him if he had known that that partner had taken measures to sell the business, and that when the breath was out of his body, the interests of his clients would be committed to the care of a stranger!

But he was spared that, for as long as he retained consciousness Bathurst talked to him at intervals, as if he shared all his sympathies and anxieties; and before many hours had elapsed he sank into the state of oblivious trance which often precedes death.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INNER LIFE OF THE ASSURANCE OFFICE CLERK.

MINNIE JOHNSTONE sat in her little drawing-room with her three children, the eldest a boy of nine, the other two girls of seven and three. The youngest looked rosy and plump enough, but the two elder children were somewhat pale, and large-eyed, and delicate, their complexions more transparent, their forms more elegant than one likes to see. These poor town-stifled little ones were most evidently pining for want of country air, the smell of the morning, fields to run about in or sea-sands to dabble over. The mother sat on a sofa by the window, mending a rent in the

best knickerbockers of her first-born; the three-year old sprawled over the other end of the sofa, with a picture-book and a kitten; the other two were playing at some mysterious game of their own in a further corner. The room was small, the house was small, the whole establishment was small, Harry's income was small; Minnie ought to have been thin, careworn, fretful. Why, only fancy, she kept no carriage! I am positively ashamed of myself for asking any lady who puts a proper value on herself and her sex to read anything about a person who, when she went out, had to go on foot or hire a cab. And yet she was plump and rosy as her youngest child; merry, bright, with a slight inclination to quiz her fellow-creatures, a tendency arising by no means from ill-nature, but merely from the pleasure which the contemplation of the comic sides of things or people gave her.

"Tom!" she cried suddenly, dropping the

knickerbockers, and looking up aghast; for the boy had made use of an expression of startling emphasis and strength.

He had got two chairs in a corner, so arranged as to form a sort of passage, in which he stood with his legs wide apart, darting pipe-lights at his sister, who stood opposite, and made believe to attack him with a paper-knife.

"I swear," said Tom, "I swear by my infernal den, that thou shalt go no further; here will I spill thy soul!"

"Tom, what *are* you about there?"

"We are playing at 'Pilgrim's Progress,' mamma; Annie is Christian, and I am Apollyon, straddling across the breadth of the way."

"You have shown an odd taste in the part you have chosen, I think."

"Well, mamma, I don't know; someone must be beaten, you know, and *poor* Apollyon fought a long time, and did his best."

The lad was too young to understand allegorical theology, but the instinct of the hunter, the hero, and the prize-fighter, requires no fostering hand to nurse it up to maturity; whether his father be Quaker or Rapparee, every boy feels the blood course faster through his veins when he hears or reads of a fight.

"It is not a pretty game—play at something else," said the mother, making an effort to retain her gravity.

"Well, then, mamma, you be bear!" cried Annie.

"Yes, do," said Tom; "it is getting dusk."

"Oo be bear, mamma," chorused the three-year old, rolling off the sofa in sudden excitement, followed closely by the kitten.

And so this matron put aside her work—which, indeed, she could hardly have continued without candles—and drawing a large bearskin, which usually hung on the back of

an easy-chair, over her shoulders, crawled under the table on her hands and knees, and did there roar and growl and make sudden irruptions upon the three children and the kitten, who darted about and screamed with delight—that is, the human infants; the brute took its diversion in silence.

"Hulloa! what have we here—a detachment from Bedlam? Here's a state for a fellow's Penates to be in!"

"I have dropped my thimble," said Minnie, rising red and breathless.

"Ah! it is hard work looking for thimbles in the dusk! Mind, young people, mind. No, I cannot take you up, Pops, until I have got rid of these paper-bags."

"What's in the paper-bags, papa?" *(Bis)*.

"In this one muffins, in this three eggs."

"What!" cried Mrs. H. Johnstone, in an excited tone.

"Papa and mamma are going to the theatre," said Tom.

For the Harry Johnstones were in the habit of giving the children muffins and eggs for their tea whenever they indulged themselves with an evening's entertainment.

"Oh! how delightful!" cried Materfamilias. "Where is it?—what is it, Harry?"

"I hope dinner will be punctual," replied Pater.

"Punctual enough."

For at that moment the servant-maid opened the door to announce it, and the children went up-stairs to their nursery, proclaiming, in various tones and dialects, while the parents went into the dining-room, the luxuries which had been provided, and were now to be prepared for their evening meal.

"There is a new piece at the Adelphi which is very promising, and which I thought you would like to see," said Harry Johnstone, attacking his mutton. "There is a landslip, which carries the heroine, house and all, into another parish, and so causes a fatal delay in

her marriage; the villain is swallowed up by quicksands, the first chambermaid shoots a burglar, and there are many other similar incidents."

"Delightful!" cried Minnie. "But, Harry dear," she added, after a moment, looking suddenly grave, "is it not rather extravagant to go to the theatre just now? I have not told you, a man called to-day for another rate that we had not thought of."

"Bother the rate!" cried Harry. "I have good news for you. An old college friend of mine is going to marry an heiress, and has had to insure his life in her favour for twenty thousand pounds, which he has done with our office through me, and I have received sixty pounds for commission."

"Capital!"

"Wait a-bit, the best is to come; our secretary is about to retire, and the board of directors sent for me to-day, and, after asking me a number of questions, as good as promised

me the vacant post. There, there, I have spoilt your dinner, I should not have told you till afterwards."

"Oh! Harry, I was thinking of the children."

"So was I; a few months at the sea-side will be the making of them. We will look out for some quiet place on the coast, where the railway will carry me backwards and forwards to the office; or, at all events, we will live further out of town than this, somewhere near Mary and William perhaps. I dare say, too, my poor father will look with less scorn upon the secretary than he did upon the clerk. Well, do you think we can go to the Adelphi to-night without any great breach of economy?"

"Ah! I will go up and get ready at once. We should be there by the time the doors are opened if it is a new piece."

"Do not hurry yourself. I thought that as it was a particular occasion, and the house

was likely to be crowded, I would secure a couple of stalls for once. Here they are, see!"

Harry Johnstone complained of his wife's sudden loss of appetite, but he did not eat very much himself, so the servant had orders to lay supper on the table against their return, and then they went upstairs to the nursery, and saw the children in the midst of their festivity, bade them good night, and left the house. Then they walked to the nearest cabstand and took—it was dreadfully low, quite shocking, but there was a hospital in the neighbourhood, and Minnie had a horror of infection, while her husband hated the snail-like gait of a four-wheeler—a Hansom to the theatre, which they entered just as the orchestra was striking up.

I am sorry to expose my friends to contemptuous pity, but the fact is that they enjoyed the melodrama much. I do not mean to say that they had any particular preference

for that class of entertainment, but they were omnivorous in theatricals; they liked Shakspere, they delighted in legitimate comedy, they gloried in extravaganza, they even appreciated "Punch." Well, there is a compensation for everything in this world, and disciples of the *Nil admirari* school are not consistent, for they admire themselves vastly; and if people who are more easily amused must rank themselves amongst the silly ones of the earth, they enjoy their lives ten thousand-fold more than their wiser brethren, which is some slight consolation.

The foolish couple then laughed and shuddered over alternate scenes deliciously till midnight, when they once more issued into the night and took a cab homewards. And on their way Harry stopped at a fish shop, from which he presently emerged with three dozen of oysters tied up in his handkerchief, and then home.

The oysters, at opening which Harry was

an adept, with bread and cheese and beer, formed their supper; then a glass of something hot, a pipe, and many an airy castle—and so to bed.

Homely details these. *Homely!* Think of the etymology of the word before you despise it, friend. The secret of happiness lies in adapting yourself to your position in the world—a truth which everyone sees when it is applied to the class immediately below him.

CHAPTER IX.

DOMESTIC VICTIMS.

When Mary Bathurst felt assured that her husband's first excess would prove his last, she showed great ignorance of the ordinary course of human conduct. Proverbs often express a theoretical rather than a practical truth, and it is quite an exceptional "burnt child" who "dreads the fire;" the average mortal is rather apt to return again and again, like a singed moth, to the flame which finally destroys him. Then she was ignorant of the strange influence which Leeson had over the weak man, while she overrated that exercised by the ties of husband and father. And it was natural that

she should do so; for ten years her power over him had seemed unbounded, and his only ideas of happiness had, to all appearance, been connected with his home. She forgot that a needle might lie peacefully in her work-box for years, and yet, on the approach of a magnet, would none the less start instantly towards the new attraction. She knew well enough the instability of William's mind, but she knew not—how should she?—the secret tendency to everything which promised excitement and pleasure, which caused his lack of distinctive character or principle to be so dangerous. While solely under his wife's control, and with no incentive to evil before him, he was negatively virtuous, for he had not sufficient mental energy to elect to be wicked by himself; but when a stronger will than Mary's touched him, and drew him, besides, towards a course of life for which he had a dormant tendency, he was ready enough to become positively vicious.

The first thing which opened her eyes to the extent to which some other influence than her own was acting upon him, was his hesitating announcement that he had parted with his business, and the effect upon her was astounding. That he should have taken a step so important as regarded their mutual interests, so injurious to the future of their child, or possibly of their children, without consulting her, or even giving her notice of his intentions, seemed so preposterous, that she was struck dumb with incredulous amazement; but as her husband, gathering encouragement from her misconstrued silence, proceeded to claim her sympathy for his larger schemes for amassing fortune, she remembered the words which had fallen from him on the night when he had returned home intoxicated—words which had passed unheeded at the time as meaningless ravings of vinous delirium, and her astonishment gave way to indignation.

Bathurst, cowed by the vehemence of her remonstrances, muttered something about his determination not to be bullied and henpecked in his own house, and his intention of seeking pleasanter society until she was in a better temper, and left. He did not return to dinner, either that night, or the following day. Mary was in despair; she knew that if she had but time and opportunity she could regain her influence over him, but if he absented himself what chance was there? Meanwhile the foolish man was rejoicing over the fancied victory he had gained; now, at last, so he thought, he was his own master, and he revelled in the licence of his supposed freedom. On the second day Mary felt sure that he would return, and she prepared all her little domestic arts to win him back from the Evil Influence; she wore the dress he most admired, Louey was kept ready to run out and greet her father whenever he should appear, his favourite dish was ordered for din-

ner. And he came, but brought Major Leeson with him for a visit.

It was a bitter disappointment; all her little plans were dashed at once to the ground, and the only benefit she could now derive from her husband's coming home was the opportunity of ascertaining with certainty the truth of her conjectures as to who it was who possessed the power of swaying him in this marvellous manner, and a degree of satisfaction in knowing that, at any rate, it was not a woman.

As for the guest who had fallen like a shell into the middle of this heretofore quiet family, he had no idea of the light in which the mistress of the house regarded him; and, to own the truth, he would not have much cared if he had. His estimation of the softer sex was suitable rather to the twelfth than the nineteenth century, and was yet natural enough when we consider the life he had led. Neither amongst the native women of India, nor in

the female society which occasionally solaced the lighter hours of the Austrian dragoons, was he likely to acquire that habit of, perhaps, exaggerated deference to the tastes and caprices of ladies which is characteristic of the age.

To him women ranked with children—things to be petted and played with occasionally, but left, as a general rule, to find their own amusements; as for asking their opinions upon any subject, or consulting them about any proposed course of action, he would just as soon have thought of going to the nursery as the drawing-room for advice. Very barbaric, and showing great ignorance of the way in which commerce, politics, and religion are carried on in America, France, and England now-a-days; but Leeson had been all his life a man of impulse rather than of books, or of philosophic reflection. He judged of all things simply by his own personal experience, and consequently his opinions and action were,

though narrow, decided. Now, he saw that the female face was smooth, soft, and babyish —at least, the female faces which he admired were so, and he did not notice the ugly ones; so he concluded that the mind and character corresponded with the features, and that women, as it were, *never grew up;* and, as far as his limited and unfavourable opportunities for observation had gone, everything had tended to corroborate this idea. It is not in a country where girls come to maturity at twelve and thirteen—it is not in lands where the people cringe, enslaved and brutalised, under the despotic rule of a foreign invader, that a young man with his heretical ideas is likely to be converted to a full appreciation of the woman's delicate intellect.

Though Major Leeson allowed his want of proper respect for the female mind and judgment to become evident in a thousand ways, he was not rude or coarse in his behaviour towards his friend's wife. On the contrary, he

was at some pains to adapt his conversation to the rules of propriety in her presence—changed "deuce" for "dickens," if he could, when inadvertently betrayed into emphasis, and apologised if the less innocent word popped out in spite of him; noticed and endeavoured to make friends with her child and cat; asked if she minded the smell before he smoked in the dining-room; and did not, while sober, make any very great racket in the house. But he seemed by his manner utterly to ignore the idea of her having any real authority in the place. He advised Bathurst to alter this, to change that, to fit up one apartment as a billiard-room, to turn the drawing-room into the dining-room, &c., &c., without dreaming of referring to her tastes and wishes. He sent for the cook in the morning, and instructed her as to what he would have for breakfast, and how it was to be dressed; and, worst of all, he ordered dinner.

In spite of the rôle which she had imposed upon herself, Mary had a hard matter to suffer *that*, but it was very evident that any remonstrance or attempt to bring her husband to a sense of the folly and cruelty of his conduct while his friend was at hand would only cause him to absent himself from home, so she bided her time, hoping that Leeson would soon go and leave him alone with her, when she had no doubt of being able to open his eyes to the suicidal nature of the course he was pursuing, and the real character of the man whom he had selected as his friend and Mentor. For of the dissipated habits to which he was addicted, and into which he was drawing Bathurst, there could be no question—drams in the morning, the day spent in a neighbouring billiard-room, the quantity of wine and spirits consumed at and after dinner, the night devoted to cards, left no room for doubt, even to the unsophisticated mind of Mary.

At the end of the third day Leeson received

letters which called him back to London, and when he announced his intended departure on the following morning she began to hope. But, when the unwelcome guest took himself off, Bathurst went with him, and she was again foiled.

Weeks passed away, the winter melted into spring, the birds began to sing, the leaves to burst, the flowers to bloom, while on warm days boats laden with merry pleasure-seekers, who envied the unknown inhabitants of the pretty villa, once more passed the lawn, but there came no relief to Mary's anxieties. A cloud had fallen upon her life, hitherto so sunny. At first her little girl had perpetually wounded her with questions as to where her papa was? Why he stayed away so often? Why he was so queer now, and never played with her? Why that great ugly man was always with him? But, perceiving at last with a child's instinct that these questions pained her mother, she discontinued them, and the father and

husband came to be seldom mentioned by the lips which but a little while ago had hardly ever uttered a thought or discussed a little daydream with which he was unconnected.

Louey was now her mother's only consolation; to educate her little daughter, she was forced to divert her own mind from the subject on which she would otherwise have perpetually brooded; to prevent the child's early life becoming overclouded with melancholy, she found the courage to put on at any rate the appearance of cheerfulness, and the effort, like every struggle to keep the path of duty, lightened the burden of her affliction.

She never found the opportunity she had reckoned upon, of working on her husband's better feelings and affections. He stayed away for days together, and when he came was always accompanied by Leeson; the pair were inseparable. He was guilty of no act of overt unkindness towards her, provided her plentifully with money, and excused himself

for his frequent and prolonged absences by stating that they were necessary for the prosecution of the numerous and lucrative schemes in which he was engaged. As for his friendship for Leeson, how could he sufficiently show his gratitude to a man who had admitted him to a share of all his golden enterprises, and who was showing him the road to fortune?

Of all this Mary did not believe one word; though inexperienced in the byways of the world, she had sense enough to know that men did not become millionnaires who were addicted to gambling and dissipation; and William Bathurst's careworn mouth, restless eyes, and fevered nervous manner betokened a man who was losing rather than making a fortune.

But the infatuated man believed that his wife was deceived, and blinded himself to the unhappiness which, had he reasoned calmly, he must have known that he had brought

upon her. He persuaded himself that she had accommodated herself to his habits, and was contentedly engaged in her domestic and maternal duties; that when he had had his fling and made his fortune, he would return to his former quiet life, and all would go on smoothly, as it had done before he met Leeson.

His little daughter lifted a corner of the veil.

He was sitting one day on the lawn smoking, with a glass of soda-water and brandy bubbling on a little cast-iron table before him, when Louey, who was playing about, took advantage of Leeson's temporary absence to come up mysteriously to her father's knee.

"Papa," she said, "when shall you have got much money?"

"Why, you avaricious little woman, what do you ask that for?" he replied, taking her up.

"Because then you will come and live at home always, and play with Louey, and take

me and mamma in the boat, and mamma won't cry."

"Cry! Does mamma cry?"

"Oh! yes. When you are away, and she thinks I don't see her. And I ought not to have told you."

William Bathurst's heart smote him bitterly; his good angel struggled with him, and he was very nearly starting back from the brink of the precipice over which he was hurrying. But the propitious hour passed, and he only took a few extra glasses of sherry at dinner.

CHAPTER X.

WILLIAM BATHURST AS A NOBLE SPORTSMAN.

Who that had known William Bathurst a few months ago, and had taken a mental impression of him as a quiet, retiring, domestic man, of legal pursuits and office habits, dressed in professional-looking clothes of unpretending cut, would have recognized him as he stood on the platform of the Waterloo station one morning, waiting for a train to be made up? He had patent leather boots, lavender trousers, white waistcoat, scarf and collar of the smartest and newest invention, peach-coloured gloves, and white silk coat over his black frock. His glossy new hat was not jammed

on to the back of his head as of yore, but was balanced knowingly on the forehead, with a slight inclination to lurch over towards the right side; and across his shoulder there was slung a field-glass. Nor was his companion less daintily attired—how should he be, when my unheroic hero ate, drank, dressed, walked, talked in servile imitation of Major Leeson? There is little need to say where they were going. When a Spartan got himself up to any great extent, people knew he was about to fight, with long odds against him; when an Englishman appears in unusually brave attire, we may safely name horse-racing or marriage as his pursuit at the moment. It seems to be an instinctive law of nature that a victim should be dressed for a sacrifice.

"Now, what I like about the Turf," said Leeson to his companion, "is that one combines business with pleasure. That is always my study. If one is not a rich man, one must do something for one's livelihood; how

much better to fix upon a something which amuses, excites, and suits our natural tastes and dispositions, than to mistake the means for the end, and to throw away the few short years of existence we possess by painfully accumulating a wealth the only possible use of which is to make pleasureable that life which we sacrifice in gaining it. Poverty is a bore; making money by uncongenial labour is also a bore. If we can make money by an occupation that gives us pleasure, we have solved the problem of life."

"There must have been some awful mistake in our calculations lately," said Bathurst with a sigh, "for we have missed the solution of that problem by a long column of figures. It does not seem to be so easy to join pleasure with profit."

"Pooh, man!—do you forget what you made out of the Whale Preserve affair?—and again out of the bone-crushing business?"

"No; but what were the small profits

realised in those speculations against the fifty heavy losses we have sustained in other things?"

"And are men who make a sordid toil of their ventures proof against ill-luck? Look at the merchants and tradesmen who are whitewashed every year. Look at old Johnstone, your father-in-law, who has hardly had a day's pleasure in his life—has he been more lucky than ourselves? 'Lose to-day, win to-morrow,' has always been my motto. Another proverb says, 'Patience and shuffle the cards,' and that is what we are going to do. The Stock Exchange has failed us for the moment; well, we have met our engagements honourably and can try again another time; in the meanwhile, we will have a shot at the Turf, which, after all, is *the* speculation for a gentleman. You spend your days in the fresh air of the country, surrounded by men of rank and beautiful women, not in the smoky atmosphere of the City; you hurry rapidly

from town to town, so that, before you have time to be bored by a scene, it changes; your attention is absorbed in perpetual contemplation of that most beautiful and noble of animals, the horse; and then the rapture of the race! To see the animal upon which you stand to win a heavy stake coming into the distance pulling double, while two or three in front are doing all they know, and fancying they have the race to themselves. Then suddenly *your* jockey lets his horse go, in half a dozen strides he is level with the leaders, he passes them and shoots by the winning-post a couple of lengths ahead. But I think you have never seen a race?"

"Never," replied Bathurst.

"Then I envy you," said Leeson, "for you have a new sensation in store for you. But here is the train at last; look sharp, or we shall have to wait for the next."

By dint of pushing and struggling, in a

manner which would have been of good service in a *rooge* at football, they crowded into a carriage, and were soon steaming away towards Epsom.

So soon as they were fairly off, Leeson commenced a careful study of his card; referring at times to a little book which contained the former performances of those horses which had already run in public, and making observations to his companion on the different races the programme contained; for though he knew well enough that they could not be appreciated, he wished to initiate him in the mysteries of their new enterprise, and, besides, it was necessary to his happiness to talk about what interested him at the moment.

"There is Excalibar in, I see, for this first race; he will be made a hot favourite if he starts, and we may have to lay level. I had a chance of getting five to one about him last night, and I almost wish I had taken it."

"It was a pity you did not," said Bathurst, making a shot.

"Well, I do not know—it is a great chance if he starts."

"Why, are not all the horses printed on the card sure to run?"

"Bless you, no, half of them are scratched on the morning of the race."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the novice in astonishment, "how careless grooms must be! I knew that the race-horse was a very delicate creature, but I had no idea that he was so tender as to be rendered unable to run by a scratch! I thought they were sometimes spurred."

Leeson went off in convulsions.

"Oh! Billy, Billy," he cried, when he had somewhat recovered, "you will be the death of me. A horse is said to be *scratched*, man, when, for some reason or other, he is struck out of a race for which he has been entered."

"Oh! I see," said the blushing Bathurst. But he didn't, quite.

In conversation such as this, in the course of which Bathurst picked up a little turf information, and a good deal of turf slang, for a first lesson, they arrived at Epsom, and, taking a fly, pursued their way up a tedious ascent towards the Downs. Everything astonished the novice; all the blackguards of London seemed to be assembled there for the purpose of selling cards, with which everybody he could see seemed to have provided himself before starting. How did they make the occupation answer? Why did they all call him "my lord," or "my noble captain?" Who paid the acrobats, the stilt-walkers, the jugglers, the organ-men? He followed Leeson like one in a dream, and was first led to the Grand Stand, and made to take a weekly ticket; then out on the course, and along a row of carriages, in some of which were ladies, in others women who were not ladies, among

the latter of whom Leeson, I am sorry to say, seemed to have an extensive acquaintance. Then a bell rang, and the confusion increased tenfold, in the midst of which he was dragged back to the betting-ring.

"What a crowd!" he exclaimed, when safe behind the railings.

"Crowd! why, there is no one here!" rejoined his Mentor. "You will see on the Derby and Oaks days what a crowd is. By Jove! the numbers are up, and—yes—Excalibar starts! I shall put a pony on—you had better do the same."

"A pony?"

"Pshaw! twenty-five pounds is called a pony. That will be fifty pounds between us, eh?"

"I know nothing about it," said Bathurst, naively. "Do for me as you would for yourself."

"All right—you are the sort of fellow I like to do business with. Stop here a bit,

and light a cigar, I will join you in a minute."

Leeson plunged into a crowd, the most active and important particles of which seemed to be not the aristocratic and fashionably attired members, but certain men who, in dress and general appearance, resembled respectable tradesmen, and who all held open memorandum books in their hands. There was a distant murmur, and then one of these men suddenly shouted out, "Five to four on the field!" Another and then another caught up the cry, and soon the roar of voices became so tremendous that Bathurst's former confusion was as nothing to the bewilderment which now overflowed his wits. Presently Leeson rejoined him, saying:

"I could only get five to four."

"Now do tell us, like a good fellow, what that means?" said the novice.

"Why, it means that if that jockey in white with a plaid sash across his body, who

is now cantering past, comes back first, you will win thirty pounds; if any of those others beat him you will lose twenty-five."

But Bathurst could not make it all out; he was excited because all around him were so, and excitement is catching, but he was unable to follow the race or distinguish the horses. However, Excalibar won, and he thought when, after another temporary absence, Leeson returned, and gave him three ten pound notes as his share of the spoil, that he had discovered a very rapid and pleasing method of making money."

"And with whom do you bet?" he asked his friend.

"Oh!" said Leeson, "with almost any of the ring men here to-day; on the occasion of the big races one has to be more careful, as blacklegs—*welchers*, as they are called—will slip in among them then."

"And who are the 'ring men?'"

"The book-makers—those men who call

out the odds, and many of whom you may now see in the midst of little crowds, settling on the last race."

"Those quiet, respectable men? Why, I expected to see a lot of flashily-dressed fellows with horsey trousers, villainous eyes, and hooked noses, compounds of the jockey, prize-fighter, pickpocket, and Jew."

"Ah! You see men of that stamp hanging about the sporting publics; you will find plenty now, I dare say, in the smaller stands and on the Downs; but the regular bookmakers are of a very different order—quiet, calm men, with wonderful powers of self-restraint and ability to keep their heads cool under the most intense excitement, combined with extraordinary talents for rapid calculation, and most tenacious memories. I do not suppose that, as a general rule, they are perfect models of squeamish virtue, any more than you or I are, but they keep their engagements for the most part, and, I do

believe, are more upright than many of the 'gentlemen' who engage in turf transactions. If it were not so, the whole affair would soon go down in public estimation."

"You knew the man you made the bet with, and thought you could trust him; but how did he know that he could trust you?"

"He did not—it is not expected of them. I staked the money when the bet was made."

"You mean to say that you placed fifty pounds in his hands and walked away quite confident of seeing it again if you won?"

"Certainly, and sixty more added to it; and I wish it had been six hundred, or six thousand for that matter. You look astonished, but honesty is their best policy; if he has the requisite talent and capital enough to hold out against temporary reverses, the book-maker *must* win. He is independent of fortune, for it is a mathematical certainty that a man who lays a point over the odds (which

they never do) must lose, while he who lays under them must, in the long run, win."

It was a strange thing that it never occurred to either tutor or pupil that if these bookmakers, out of whom they proposed to make their fortunes, were sure, "in the long run," to be the gainers, it seemed to follow that the backers of horses, themselves amongst them, must be the losers. But gambling is the most illogical of occupations.

What with Leeson's explanations and his eyes becoming accustomed to the scene around him, Bathurst was better able to make out the second race, on which, however, he only ventured a couple of sovereigns, which he lost. But I do not mean to follow his fluctuating fortunes through the day, or, indeed, to dwell upon scenes which were so new, and, therefore, so attractive to his indolent, pleasure-loving nature.

For though I do not hold, as a general rule, that a story-teller is in any way bound to

avoid scenes and incidents which have been described a thousand times before, seeing that an attempt to do so must either prove an utter failure or else throw him into a world of imagination and unreality, which it would be very uninteresting to most people to read about, yet still, when I think of the humour which has been poured in such a lavish flood over every possible incident connected with an English race-course—when I call to mind the descriptions which fill the newspapers on the occasion of every great meet—when in particular I remember the effect first produced by the account of Hampton Races in "Nicholas Nickleby," when Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord Verisopht made their excursion to that pretty spot, I shrink from the attempt to give any account of one of those English carnivals which seem to have so peculiar an attraction for the Anglo-Saxons; just as an ordinary performer on the pianoforte might feel disgusted with his own little attempts to extract

harmony from his favourite instrument after hearing Miss Arabella Goddard play. But having undertaken the task of tracing the steps of a man who had the misfortune to come into the world, like a colonial servant into a new place, without a character, along the Broad Path, it was necessary to touch thus lightly upon his first entrance into new scenes and employments which drew him downwards with alarming rapidity.

Suffice it, then, to say that, when Leeson had no particular fancy for any horse in a race, he only staked a trifle for amusement upon it; but when, from the public running, favourable weighting, or evidently good *form* of one of the competitors, he felt sanguine of success, he risked a larger sum; and as it was what is called a "good day for the gentlemen," that is, as most of the favourites won, he, and therefore Bathurst, found themselves at the conclusion of the day's sport the winners of several hundred pounds. This good

fortune lasted throughout the meeting with but trifling fluctuations; Bathurst won heavily on the Derby, and again on the Oaks, while the minor events swelled rather than diminished the stream which was flowing into his pockets, and he began to be known and noticed in racing circles as a bold and successful backer of horses, and was marked by several gentlemen, whose habits did not quite coincide with their incomes, as one from whom possible pickings might be scraped by means of those games of mingled chance and skill with which the regular *habitué* of racecourses is accustomed to beguile his evenings.

And there was a spur sharper than the madness of a first success to urge that doomed man onwards towards higher stakes and rasher ventures. What were the sums he had gained to the gap which former speculations had made in his fortune? In a few months he had brought himself to the verge of ruin; for

he had backed bills for his friend to meet his engagements with, and had so become involved to a far greater extent than he had at first contemplated as possible, let his losses be what they might; and besides this, he was the holder of shares which no one would accept even as a gift, and to the payment of calls upon which he was constantly liable. The man who is afflicted with a mania for gaming is in a bad way, but when he adopts it as a means of repairing a shattered fortune, he may be considered as finally done for.

I do not mean to say that William Bathurst started with the insane idea of getting back all his losses out of the 'cute Yorkshiremen, and wary Newmarket bookmakers, at a game which was their profession, but that he gradually drifted into such an absurd project is beyond a doubt.

When he first found out how deeply he had become involved by his Stock Exchange transactions, he went half crazy, and though

he soon grew apparently callous, it was only because he resolutely forced himself to put away the idea of his wife and child, and the position to which his folly must reduce them; and he durst not have spent a day alone, or gone to bed at night with a brain perfectly unclouded by the fumes of alcohol. When Leeson proposed to him to try their luck in horse-racing, he acceded rather for the purpose of losing the sense of the realities of life in new scenes and fresh dissipations than with any serious idea of winning anything; but the successes of that Epsom week aroused him from the lethargy into which he had been falling, and caused his heart to beat high with hope of retrieving his losses. For he attributed the result of mere chance to the skilful combinations and horsey talents of Leeson, and believed in him more than ever, though, if he had been a little more experienced and a little less blind, he might have seen that Leeson's tactics consisted in little more than back-

ing the favourites; and as it so happened that an unusually large number of favourites won during this week, the "public" reabsorbed a little of the money which it is its pleasure annually to pour into the bookmaker's pockets.

Unobservant of all this, Bathurst threw himself heart and soul into his new mode of life; and a strange, wild existence it was for a man to spend in the midst of our placid, respectable, unsensational civilization. Now living at Chichester, now at Brighton; now spending a week in a busy manufacturing town in the extreme north of England; now in some Old World castellated wall-girt city of the west, whose moats have not as yet been *all* filled by the railways; but whatever the place of their sojourn, the life of Bathurst and Leeson was the same. They rose at ten or eleven, got up to the race-course about twelve or one, and passed the day in what I take to be the most exciting of all methods of gambling, since gladiatorial fights were

abolished. The day's sport concluded, they bathed, rested a little, and then dined, drinking just enough to make them feel inclined to drink more at a later period of the night, which was devoted to billiards, pool, or cards, diversified now and then by a little chicken hazard or roulette; and these amusements were kept up till two, three, four, or five in the morning. Sometimes they did not go to bed at all. Never, until now, had William Bathurst appreciated the institution of Sunday. Start not, nor deem that he had the impudence to take part in religious services; but he lay in bed all day, and enjoyed the rest—too weary to be kept awake even by the innate perception which he had, though he smothered it, of the precipice to which he was hurrying.

An incident proved this fact, of his not having lost all remembrance of his real position, of his duties, responsibilities, relationships, anxieties, in the giddiness of the mad

whirl in which he was careering. The Doncaster Cup was run on his little daughter's birthday; he remembered it, and wrote to Mary, sending his love to the child, together with cheques to the amount of two hundred pounds, and desiring that the money might be applied solely to her use. He mentioned no word of his losses, liabilities, or the life he was leading, but there was something very expressive in the last paragraph of his letter.

"This money is *Louey's*, mind. Do not use it for any purpose with which she is unconnected; do not give it up to myself even, should I have the baseness to ask for it!"

CHAPTER XI.

A SHIVERING OF HOUSEHOLD GODS.

To know that one we love is smitten with a fatal illness, to have to administer medicines which can but keep the flickering life in for a few weeks beyond the time when Nature, the more merciful physician, would have allowed the quiet hand of exhaustion to rest upon the sufferer; to watch day by day the wasting frame, the waning strength, the feebler breathing, this is one of the most cruel trials to which humanity is subjected. To note the gradual encroachment of madness upon the brain is worse; but to see the being upon whom our affections have been centered volun-

tarily plunging into the slough of vice and sin, is the most terrible of afflictions.

And Mary Bathurst, whose married life had, for the first ten years, been so full of quiet happiness, suffered acutely. Her love for her husband had never been of that romantic character which invests its object with impossible virtues and talents before marriage, and which too often fades into indifference or dislike when the familiarity of domestic life rubs off the tinsel which had concealed the idol's feet of clay; but a calm, reasonable affection, which it had taken years to develope, and which duty, habit, and community of interests had continually strengthened. They had rejoiced together at the birth of their children, together they had spun day-dreams of the future which awaited the infants—foolish fancies, could anyone have overheard them, but genial folly is sometimes better than inopportune wisdom—and when God called one of these little ones to a brighter

destiny than their most vivid hopes could conceive, they had prayed and wept together, and their tears were not altogether bitter.

From the very first Mary had known and felt herself to be the stronger and better of the two—the more earnest, the more steadfast, the more religious—using the latter word in a broad rather than the ordinary and conventional sense—and without art or struggle, quite unconsciously, indeed, she had assumed the guidance of him. It was not vanity, or pride, or a propensity to domineer which influenced her; when a pilot boards a ship in the channel, he takes the helm as a matter of course, and so did she. And now, after ten years of happy intimacy, when she had reason to hope that, at all events, his fickleness did not extend to his affections, that his character had matured, his principles developed, that his motives of action were of a higher nature than simply to please the fellow-creature who might be his companion at the moment, this

Major Leeson appeared, and with a word, a nod, a beck, drew him away from her, obliterated his love for her and for his child, and led him to drunkenness, debauchery, and ruin! Was it magic, or, as we now call it, magnetism? Or had the seeds of hell lain all this while undeveloped in his heart, and had this stranger brought the satanic gleam which was alone wanting to cause them to germinate? Mary was no less bewildered than sorrow-stricken.

Nor could she call to her aid the indignation which would have supported many wives under such circumstances. Her husband's mother had feared some such calamity for his weak and ductile nature, and had committed him to her almost as a trust; while, for her own part, she had acquired the habit, so readily had he always yielded to her will, of considering herself responsible for his actions. Their positions of man and wife were in a measure reversed, and her husband's depend-

ence and her own independence qualified the *meanness* of his conduct. When a woman has practically approached the theoretical standard set before her by her marriage vows, and her husband acts in a manner which renders further "honour" impossible, further "obedience" repugnant, the "love" is pretty sure to vanish also; but Mary had found herself necessarily absolved from that promise to honour and obey; she had hardly considered William a free agent, and now she blamed herself for not knowing how to maintain her influence over him, blamed Leeson for leading him astray, but pitied the culprit, and did not withdraw her affection from him.

She wrote to him often, pleading, imploring, remonstrating, pointing out the folly and cruelty of his conduct, showing him that however he might have acted, to whatever extent he might be involved, he could only make matters worse by continuing in his present

course, assuring him of pardon and assistance, if he would only return. And she received at first repentant or evasive answers, according to the writer's frame of mind at the time; and then no replies whatever, for Bathurst found that a letter from his wife made him uncomfortable for the rest of the day, and so he gave up reading them. And, indeed, his nature was not one to be acted upon by written remonstrances—it was the eye, the voice, the bodily presence of another which exercised so irresistible a power over him; Leeson might have employed the style of a Kinglake, united to the power of a Carlyle, without influencing him one iota if he had written from India or Hungary.

The letter which William Bathurst wrote on his daughter's birthday, enclosing the two hundred pounds for the child's especial use, touched Mary deeply; it was like the cry of an animal fascinated by a snake, seeing all its peril, and wheeling nearer and nearer to its

doom in ever-lessening circles. What hope was there for a man who could write and act like that, and yet continue in his miserable folly?

Mary fought her sorrow. She had no taste for being interesting, no fancy for *poseing* as a martyr. She attended as usual to her household affairs, educated and played with her child, striving hard to prevent any shadow of grief from falling across that young life; she called on her neighbours as she had been accustomed to do, and spoke of William's absence "on business" with apparent confidence and cheerfulness. To her mother, indeed, she opened her heart, for without that vent she felt that she could hardly have borne up so bravely. Mrs. Johnstone had trials of her own, for though she did not know the extent of her husband's difficulties, he had not concealed from her that he was considerably involved, and the mother and daughter often met to exchange their budgets of doubts

and fears. With her brother and Minnie, when she saw them, which was not very often, Mary was not so open; she knew that they rather despised her husband, and were angry with him for giving up his business, and she shrank from exposing him to their censure; and this was a pity, for had Harry Johnstone known the real state of affairs, he would have sought his brother-in-law out, and might very likely have broken the meshes in which the misguided man was entangled.

It was a warm bright day in the early autumn, the apple trees in the garden were laden with rosy or golden fruit, the surface of the river was strewn with fallen leaves, the fields beyond were bright and cheerful with standing sheaves, waggons picturesquely laden, busy reapers, laughing gleaners, and all the sights and sounds which render a harvest scene so pleasant when viewed from a distance.

The garden at Teddington showed no sign

of the wretched blight which had fallen upon the home which it adorned; the lawn was as closely shaven, the flower-beds as carefully tended, the gravel walks as neatly kept as ever. Only the boat had an air of shabbiness; want of paint and tar, sun-blisters, heaps of dried leaves, bits of sticks or paper, and puddles of rain water accumulated in the stern and under the seats, betokened neglect. Indeed, no one ever entered it except the cat, who sat now in the forward part, winking lazily at the swallows that flitted continually round him. Ships and boats are the first things to pine and get spoilt and shabby if they are neglected; perhaps that is the reason they have been made feminine.

Mary Bathurst sat in the little summer-house overhanging the river, making up her monthly household accounts. Her husband had not left her short of money, nor had he led her to expect that there was any reason for particular economy. So she had not re-

duced her expenses in any way, had not parted with the pony carriage, or made any other difference which would have drawn the attention of the neighbours, but she had a sense of impending danger; inexperienced in the ways of the world as she was, she knew well enough that habits of dissipation can lead but to one result; she suspected that Major Leeson was a sharper, who was leading her husband astray for his own selfish ends, and she was aware that he had been connected with several of those schemes in which her father had lost money. And therefore she kept a more careful watch than before upon the tradesmen's bills, allowing none of them to fall into arrear; determined that, happen what might, there should be no additional complication of outstanding accounts as far as she was concerned —no one with whom she dealt should be the loser by her neglect. As she sat making entries from several little books into a larger one bound in parchment, you might have

noticed a change which had come over her face in the last six months; you could not have specified it, or have said that she was paler or thinner, but that look of anxiety and disenchantment which settles sooner or later on the features of almost every human being who attains the middle age had overclouded hers. Presently she ceased from her task, the pen fell from her fingers unheeded to the ground, her brow contracted into an expression of pain, and she sank into a melancholy reverie.

She was aroused from her gloomy thoughts by her daughter's voice calling to her in a tone of excitement and alarm; and the little feet came pattering along the gravel path at a great rate, and then commenced painfully climbing the winding iron staircase of the summerhouse, the sharp silvery voice never ceasing its cry of "Mamma! mamma!"

"What is it, dear?" asked Mary, when the child stood before her.

"Oh! mamma," cried Louey, "do send them away; they are so ugly!"

"Who are ugly, dear?"

"The two men; they came into the drawing-room, where I was putting dolly to bed on the sofa, and they didn't ring, but walked in through the garden, and I was so frightened that I ran away and left dolly behind me; come quick, or perhaps they will hurt her! And do you know, mamma," added Louey, dropping her voice and opening her large eyes to their widest, "they took me for a little goat, for when they came in one of them said, 'No one here but a kid!' But I'm not like a kid really, mamma—am I?"

Surprised and alarmed, Mary, with the child clinging closely to the skirt of her dress, made her way to the house, from which loud voices were now heard in altercation; and, on entering the drawing-room, she found the three women servants, who composed the establishment, engaged in controversy with two

men who could hardly have got heavy damages out of Louey for calling them ugly. One, a heavy fat man, with a squint, a broken nose, black lips, and enormous ears, was reclining in an easy-chair, and mopping up the profuse perspiration on his bald head and forehead with a blue handkerchief which he had taken out of his hat—the other, a tall, low-bred Jew, with the peculiar features of his race exaggerated almost to deformity, with long, greasy black hair and unpleasant clothes, was standing near the door and flourishing a document of some sort in the faces of the domestics, saying,

"Itsh all right, my tarlings; don't shu interfere with the law, but mind shure own pishness, and see you get shure waches."

"What is all this?—who are these men?—and what do they want?" said Mary, entering at the moment.

"Hoighty toighty!" cried the Jew, "it sheems to me nobody gives themselves airs

like peoplish in debt! Who are these *men* indeed!"

"Shut up, Moss; don't you see the missis is scared?" cried the fat man, replacing his hat handkerchief, and rising from his chair. "Sarvent, marm; you must excuse poor Moss, as is a downy cove in his perfession, but only a poor unbaptised heathen, after all, what don't know perliteness or the ways of us Christians. We are gentlemen of the law, marm—I am the man in possession."

"I do not understand you," said Mary; "pray speak more plainly."

"Speak more plain?" cried the fat man. "Why, it's difficult to do that."

"Her hushpand vos a lawyer, and she pretents not to know what pailiffs is!" observed the Jew.

"Shut up, Moss!" repeated the fat man. "How can you expect the lady to ax you if you won't drink summut, if you don't keep a civil tongue in your 'ed?"

"Bailiffs?" cried Mary.

"Yes, marm, that's about it."

"And what are you here for?"

"Well," rejoined the fat man, "to see that nothink in the way of furniture or other wallibles ain't moved away surreptitious, otherwise we hopes to be no hindrance to you; them as treats Bob Panter civil, gets treated civil by Bob Panter, them's his sentiments."

"And how long are you to remain here?" asked Mary.

"If so be, marm, as you have got sich a thing as £1,000 14*s.* 9*d.* in the house, we are ready to go on that same being paid over; if not, we must stop until our employers are satisfied, or the things sold."

"I do not understand!" cried Mary. "If my husband owes this money, he will pay it without men being put into his house to see that his wife does not sell off the furniture.

A thousand pounds is not so large a sum that it will ruin Mr. Bathurst to have to pay it."

"P'raps not, marm, but unfortunately there's a good many of these here writs out, some for less, some for more, and every man has to look after his own interests first."

While he was speaking Mary recovered herself a little from her first indignant surprise. She saw that these men were but subordinate agents, with no more to do with the fortunes or misfortunes of the people into whose houses they intruded, than mutes have with the death of those whose funerals they are supposed to grace. She had also the good sense to perceive that the bailiffs might make themselves more or less disagreeable in the execution of their duty, and that conciliation was the wisest policy of the weak.

"Place some refreshments in the library, Jane," she said to the housemaid, and then added, turning to the fat man, "I suppose it

does not matter to you what room you are in, so long as you are in the house."

"It should look out towards te front," said the Jew, "'cos——"

"Shut up, Moss!" reiterated the fat man. "We can lock up the stable and coach-house, and take a turn round now and then, can't we, stoopid? The liberry will do, marm, with a heasy chair or a sofa, and them refreshments you spoke of. Come along, Moss, and leave the lady her bowdoor, can't yer?"

"Are the ugly men going quite away, mamma?" asked Louey, when the drawing-room was clear, looking up at her mother with large round wondering eyes.

"No, dear," replied Mary, "not at present. But see, here is dolly quite safe—play with her a little while, and keep quiet; mamma wants to think."

She had indeed need for time to collect her thoughts and take counsel with herself what to do next under such unforeseen and trying

circumstances, and she sat for a long while with her arms resting on the table, and her face buried in her hands, the fingers of which were pressed hard against her throbbing temples. At length she determined how to act for the present, and she rose resolutely and rang the bell.

"Send cook and Sarah here," she said, when the housemaid answered the summons, "and come up with them too."

The servants had been expecting some such call, and were assembled in the room almost immediately.

"This—this misfortune," said Mary, hesitating, before she found the word, "has taken me by surprise; it may be only temporary, or caused by a mistake, but I do not think so. I am convinced that I am no longer in a position to keep servants, and do not wish you to lose by me. I have the power now to pay your wages—I may not be able to do so to-morrow, so I will give you your money at

once. I am sorry to part from you; we have been together for some years—" here the housemaid, Jane, a pretty-looking girl of three or four-and-twenty, burst into tears—" during which I have been very happy, and have always wished that those about me should be the same."

Here cook, who had reached the mature age of forty, and so bore up against her feelings longer than Jane, but who was gratefully mindful of Sundays out, and an allowed follower from Hounslow Barracks, fairly broke down. Sarah the nurse, a tall and somewhat gaunt young woman, kept swallowing enormous mouthfuls of nothing and rubbing her elbows vehemently, but otherwise mastered her emotion.

It was a couple of minutes at least before Mary could go on, for Louey, seeing that sorrow was the order of the day, burst into a fit of sympathetic weeping, and her mother had to take her on her knee and soothe her.

"However," she pursued at last, "it cannot be helped, and you had better leave at once."

"What!" sobbed cook, "leave you all alone with them men?—no, ma'am."

"Oh! how could master go and do it?" cried Jane.

"You two can go," said Sarah—"I stops. You has your friends living handy; I come out of Cheshire, I do," and she polished away at her elbows more vigorously than ever.

"But you need not fear for me," said Mary, more overcome by the kind feeling shown by her servants than by her trouble; "I intend to go at once to my mother, and probably shall not return here—at least, for the present."

"I stops!" repeated Sarah, stamping her foot—"don't us, Miss Louey, dear?"

"Yes, Sally, stop," decided that young lady, gravely.

The conference was disturbed by a violent

ringing at the garden-gate, and on looking out Mary saw a female figure hurrying up to the house.

It was Mrs. Johnstone.

Oh! the feeling of joy which thrilled through Mary's frame at the sight of her mother. It was like the glimpse of a sail caught by the shipwrecked sailor from his open boat, or the approach of aid to the soldier who lies wounded on the day after the battle. For the first time that day she was now quite overcome, and threw herself, sobbing hysterically, into Mrs. Johnstone's arms. The servants retired, Sarah taking the child with her, and mother and daughter were left alone.

"Oh! mamma," said Mary, when she had recovered herself, "did you come here by accident, or have you heard?"

"I received a letter this morning, but I did not expect that *you* would have known about it."

"You have had a letter?" cried Mary, surprised.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Johnstone; "and I fear that the ruin is complete."

"I dreaded as much," said Mary.

"Yes," continued her mother, "writs are out against him, but he has escaped to Boulogne."

"Ah! I did not know that."

"His troubles have been too much for him; he has had a fit, and is very ill."

"Ill!" cried Mary—"a fit, you say, and I——"

"Do not be over-alarmed," interrupted Mrs. Johnstone; "since he has recovered sufficiently to write to me, the worst must be over."

"He has written to *you*, do you say?"

"Yes, from Boulogne, and I am now on my way to join him; but I would not leave without coming to break the news to you, and

take leave, for you have your own troubles, I well know."

"He is lying ill at Boulogne, and has written to you!" repeated Mary in astonishment, "and you are on your way to join him!"

"Yes; I shall not miss a packet, for at his age such attacks are dangerous."

"At his age?—why, mamma, of whom are you speaking?"

"Of your father, dear, of course."

"Papa, too—is *he* ruined?—ill?—an outcast?"

"Then you had not heard of it?" said Mrs. Johnstone, taking both her daughter's hands, and looking steadfastly into her eyes. "I thought it impossible that you should have; and there is some other trouble impending?—what is it?"

Mary was on the point of pouring out all her sorrows, when she suddenly remembered what pain it would give her mother to know

that she was just about to ask of her a home at the moment when she had no home to offer. No, she had troubles enough of her own to bear without her daughter's situation being heaped upon them; and so Mary Bathurst turned from the sympathy for which she thirsted as the fever-stricken for water, and, with a self-denial which was nothing less than heroism, concealed her present position. It would not have been easy for her to do this on ordinary occasions, but poor Mrs. Johnstone's head was in such a whirl and tumult that she took little notice of what, at any other time, would have excited her maternal alarm in the highest degree; and when Mary explained away her emotion on first seeing her mother, and her seeming allusion to some ill news which she had received, by generalities about her husband's continued absence and reckless way of living, the good lady accepted them without suspicion.

Poor Mrs Johnstone, she had a right to

feel bewildered! After a life of easy, humdrum, affluent respectability, to find herself, when nearly at the age of sixty, brought suddenly into the midst of ruin, flight, bankruptcy, words associated in her mind with battle, murder, and sudden death; and to have to start, she, to whom a journey of fifty miles had always been a momentous event, thus suddenly, at an hour's notice, for a foreign country, of whose inhabitants and their ways she had a particular horror, not often met with now-a-days, when constant communication has partially taught us that all human beings are pretty much the same when you get under the skin! Poor old dear! no wonder her brain was not quite so clear as usual.

The fly, in which she had come from the station, was waiting at the door, as she only had about half an hour to spare for her visit to Mary. This was fortunate, for if she had depended upon the pony carriage to take her

back to the railway, and Mary had ordered it out, the key of the stable-door would have been found in the possession of the bailiffs, whose presence might thereby have been discovered. As it was, Mrs. Johnstone left without suffering the additional pang which the knowledge of her daughter's having to entertain such unwelcome guests would have given her.

When her mother was gone, Mary felt indeed desolate. How should she act?—to whom apply for advice and protection? There was her brother, but she had many reasons for feeling great delicacy about applying to him. He had enough to do to support his own family, and would, no doubt, be called upon to help their father. No, she would remain where she was until she heard from her husband, or was turned out of the house.

She had another interview with the servants, and it was finally settled that the cook

and housemaid should leave on the following morning. But Sarah stuck to her ultimatum.

"Wages or no wages, I stops!" said she. And she stopped.

CHAPTER XII.

A QUIET WATERING-PLACE.

An uncommonly quiet watering-place—that is what Shinglebay is; a residence about which you can entertain no intermediate opinion—you must either like it or hate it very much. If you are in the habit of considering Brighton and Scarborough as the models of seaside towns, do not go to Shinglebay; if you prefer the more free-and-easy cockney bathing resorts, such as Margate or Ramsgate, do not go to Shinglebay. With some people sea-bathing means showing off their fine clothes to other human peacocks, with others riding, with a third party flirting, with a fourth

lounging aloof all day watching the humours of their fellow-creatures, with a fifth billiards —none of these delights are to be enjoyed at Shinglebay, except flirting, and *that* goes on in the Great Desert of Sahara itself, I believe. But there are no livery stables, no assembly rooms, no brass bands, no billiard-rooms. If, however, your ideas of sea-bathing are of a more literal kind, you can, if a gentleman, walk round a jutting cliff, kick off your clothes, and choose your rock for a header—you can get five feet of water at low tide. If you are a lady, there are a couple of machines in a sandy nook where you can try to learn swimming, without your progress in that art being critically watched through every description of telescope and opera-glass. Then, if you are fond of collecting sea-anemones, and other wonders of the shore, you can pursue that employment in any costume you please; if you come home wet through, with a hand-net in one hand, a pail full of speci-

mens in the other, and a basket of sea-weed at your back, no one will stare. Boats can be had on reasonable terms; and the sailors who own them are good company, not like the blarneying sycophantic bastards of Neptune who are not ashamed *to beg* of the visitors to Brighton. Principally, there is a reading-room, where the daily papers arrive before noon, where most of the weeklies are taken in on the day of publication, and which is a branch of a London circulating library; and if you want to read a thrilling novel comfortably without distraction, go to Shinglebay. If, on the other hand, you are a producer rather than a consumer of light literature, I will only say that the author who does not get on with his work *there* must lay the blame on his own laziness or barrenness, and not fudge it off upon inconsiderate friends, troublesome neighbours, and those scape-goat street musicians, who, if they do spoil a good deal of head-work, often afford a welcome excuse

for sending books and papers flying, and rushing off to join some pleasure party which press of business had made it a duty to decline.

Shinglebay suited the Johnstone family admirably; the situation was open and healthy, and if they grew too dull they could walk over to a neighbouring town, where there was a railway station from which Harry went up to London every morning. They had got a cottage for a pound a week, and living was proportionably cheap, so Minnie was delighted. Dull? Not a bit of it; of course she would have preferred a gay town, with good shops, carriages, saddle-horses, dinner parties, balls, concerts, &c., for her natural tastes were all in that way; but she was not one of those miserable jaundiced mortals who spend their lives in crying for the moon, and who, by-the-bye, when they obtain their moon, whatever it may be, are never one whit the happier or more contented. From the day of her marriage she had adopted the habit of

making the best of things, and those very shifts and difficulties which sometimes turn the temper and grizzle the hair of housewives, whose vulgar souls are perpetually tormented by the consideration of what their neighbours and servants will think of them, were often to her positive sources of amusement. So she was pleased enough with the change from the close neighbourhood of London to the fresh champagney air of the sea-coast, pleased with the quaint quietude of the place, with the opportunities she now once more had for sketching and novel-reading—employments she had not found much time for during the last few years—pleased, above all, with the almost instantaneous benefit which the two elder children derived from their change of residence. Were they not happy, those three little Johnstones?

No sea-side place can be too dull for children; if they can run in and out as they please, get as wet and dirty as they like, and

have free license to scramble about the boats on the beach without any fear of being perpetually called to order, they are in paradise. May rain spoil the bonnets, carriage-wheels dirty the dresses, and moths get into the furs of unnatural mothers who seek to gratify their own paltry vanity by sacrificing their babes to the Moloch gentility! Ah! you poor little ones, dragged up in the gutter, over whom moralists philosophise, and philanthropists squabble, you suffer terribly from cold, hunger, wet, drunken parents, policemen, and guardians; but be comforted, the life of the children whose fine clothes you often covet is not all ginger-beer and nine-pins.

The little Johnstones just *were* happy, however, and any children, from the palace to the Whitechapel cellar, might have envied them their visit to Shinglebay. There was the sea, seen for the first time. Was all that really water? And when you got out there, as far as you could see, what was there?

More water? Wonderful! Then there were the sands, in which you could dig wells, positive wells, with water at the bottom; real fishermen, who mended real nets on the beach; shells, sea-weed, innumerable delights; and these were to be enjoyed, not for a week, or a month, but for a clear half-year, that being the term for which Harry Johnstone had let his own house, and hired the one at Shingle-bay. And he transacted the business, by-the-bye, on such fortunate terms, that his six months' sojourn by the sea-side would be but slight extra expense to him, in spite of the large sum absorbed by the purchase of his season ticket.

His hopes had been realized, he had obtained the secretaryship, and now saw some prospect of living sufficiently within his income to make provision for the education of his children. For he had for some time given up all hope of inheriting anything from his father, even if he became entirely recon-

ciled to him; he was well aware of the nature of certain speculations in which the elder Johnstone had been lately engaged, and suspected that he must have become considerably involved, although his worst anticipations fell short of the truth. However, he had learned the wholesome lesson of self-dependence thoroughly, and was happy.

His success in life had exceeded his hopes; his wife was everything to him that a wife could be, and his children were evidently recovering from that delicacy which had been his sole cause for anxiety. It is true that his daily journey backwards and forwards was rather trying, for he had to breakfast at half-past seven, and then walk to the railway, undergo an hour and a half's shaking which seemed to loosen every joint in his back-bone, go to his office, do his day's work, have his spine jolted again, and then walk home. In fine, calm weather he did not feel it so much, but in wet and stormy days he got back to

Shinglebay in the evening considerably fatigued. Nor did habit lessen this distress occasioned by too rapid travelling; on the contrary, while he did not perceive it the first week, and felt it but slightly the second, it became more and more sensible after that daily, and had it not been for the Sunday rests, he would have been obliged to sleep occasionally in town.

I mention this because a similar phenomenon is not unusual among men who have to work hard with their brains every day, and it should be taken into consideration by those who are calculating the advisability of fixing their residence at some distance from the town to which their daily avocations call them. But stokers, guards, commercial travellers—how do they manage? Their work is not brain work, and it is those who have to think and calculate who seem to be most affected by having their spines jolted.

Pardon a digression which has nothing to

do with the action of my story—I do not think I am often guilty of such. A friend has suffered, and I cannot help uttering my little warning from the only platform to which I have access. Should any great bully of a railway company prosecute me for my words, I shall plead that they are only the maunderings of a professed work of fiction. But they are fact for all that, unprejudiced reader.

Minnie was sorry to see her husband come home every day so jaded, principally for his sake, but partly also for her own, for she sadly wanted an adult to talk to; and after adapting her conversation to the children all day, it was a disappointment to find Harry sleepy and monosyllabic in the evening.

Indeed, in spite of what has been said truly enough at the beginning of this chapter, she did, at the end of a month, occasionally find the days drag somewhat heavily on hand. The sea, considering its proverbial fickleness, is rather monotonous; the pursuit of miner-

alogy, conchology, and seaweedology is apt to pall when undertaken on no particular system by a person who has no real taste for such studies; star-fish and sea-anemones are curious but not intelligent creatures; one is not always in the vein for sketching, and novels are occasionally dull. (Ugh! don't!) And so it happened that Minnie made the acquaintance of a gentleman on the beach.

He was an elderly gentleman, with long grey hair, who stooped rather, and supported himself when walking with a gold-headed cane, and who spent most of his time either by the sea or on it. At eleven o'clock every morning he came down to the beach, and if it was fine, a sailor set a chair for him, upon which he sat and perused the newspaper, smoking cigars the while; when it was cold or squally, he took refuge in a boat-house, which was fitted up for him, and from the open door of which the thin blue smoke might then be seen to curl. Later in the day he

generally, "wind and weather permitting," took a sail in a small yawl which he had bought, a little vessel easily managed by a couple of men and a boy, and which, by the aid of a windlass, could be drawn up high on the beach, when the weather threatened to be rougher than she could well ride out in the but partially-sheltered and not too secure anchorage of the little bay. Or when it was too calm for sailing, he would take a row-boat out to the whiting ground, or the Lobster-pot Rock, and spend the day in fishing.

This old gentleman, though he seemed rather to shun all grown-up people but the sailors who managed his boat, was evidently fond of children. He would often watch the little Johnstones with great interest, while they erected a sand-fortress, or dug a formidable dyke, having a massive embankment, which they were determined *should* resist the efforts of the next tide to wash it all level, and make grave remarks upon the progress

of their engineering works; and one day, when they were caught in a shower, he had them into his boat-house, where he gave them cake; and, the rain continuing, sent them home enveloped in pea-jackets, a style of costume in which the youngest girl looked remarkably funny.

Minnie could not but thank him for his kindness when she next saw him, and he took the opportunity of her speaking to him to ask if she would allow him to take her boy out fishing. To Tom's great delight she assented; and after that, whenever Mrs. Harry Johnstone made her appearance on the beach, the old man with the white hair and beard was quite sure to come up and make a few remarks to her.

Though he spoke rationally enough about the weather and so forth, Minnie soon discovered that there was something the matter with her new acquaintance; in the middle of a sentence he would become lost, absent, and

it was with an evident effort that he gathered his thoughts together sufficiently to follow the thread of even the simplest conversation. As at the time of their morning greetings he generally held a paper in his hand, she would naturally ask him if there was any news, upon which he would brighten up and say that there was something which had interested him a minute ago. But what it was he could not tell without reference, and as he turned over the leaves of the journal, the *lost* look became painfully visible.

The children, however, saw nothing peculiar about him, and took to him at once, Miss Pops ("Pops" short for Ellen, though how derived, I am unable to explain) climbing unbidden on to his knee on the third day of acquaintance. Perhaps this sudden conquest of the juvenile affections was somewhat furthered by a silver snuff-box filled with sugar-plums, which the old man carried about him; and yet the French philosophy which traces

the motive of all human actions to selfishness is not so true as it looks.

So quiet a place was Shinglebay, that the daily meeting with this mysterious stranger, and the consequent speculations who he was, why he lived there, &c., came to occupy quite a prominent place in Minnie's life; and the absurd theories advanced by Harry, as they sat chatting after dinner, by no means tended, though she laughed at them at the time, to diminish the romantic curiosity with which she regarded the old man. He was a sultan, who had drowned so many wives that his conscience pricked him, and he had come incognito to this country of monogamy and policemen, trusting that the Society for the Protection of Women would save him from further indulgence in the evil habit he had contracted. He was a Protestant ex-Pope, who had been declared dead by the cardinals, and bound by them, with a terrible oath, never to scandalise the catholic world by di-

vulging the secret of his conversion! He was a reformed pirate! He was the Wandering Jew! Such were some of the probabilities started by Harry Johnstone one Saturday night concerning the man who had made the acquaintance of his family at the beginning of the week.

"However," he said, when his ingenuity began to ache, "I shall be able to judge better when I have seen him, which I suppose I can do to-morrow. Does he go to church?"

"Of course! That is, I suppose so; I hope so!" replied Minnie, horrified by the possibility of having let Tom go out sailing with a man of heterodox or free-thinking tendencies.

The old gentleman did go to church, and as the Harry Johnstones came out of the porch next day, after morning service, the two elder children, who had accompanied them, ran up to their friend, who stopped and greeted them with a smile, which was hardly

in keeping with the more barbarous antecedents which had been invented for him the evening before.

Minnie joined the group, and, after exchanging salutations, introduced her husband.

"I have to thank you, sir, for your kindness to my children," said Harry, holding out his hand.

The old man took it frankly.

"The gratitude should be all on my side," said he. "I am a lonely old man, and the sight of these happy young faces has given me a pleasure I have not felt for many a long year!" and he passed his hand over his brow, as the expression of pain crossed his face. "This little girl, Annie, seems, at times, to have an expression which I have dreamed of," he continued, as if to himself.

"She is thought to be very like her mother," said Harry, not quite knowing what other remark to make.

"So she is! so she is! I have noticed

that!" said the stranger, looking at Minnie with his most puzzled expression.

While conversing in this way, they had been walking on along the road which led from the church to that modern part of Shinglebay where the few visitors resided, and they had now come to the path which branched off towards the house where the old gentleman lived; he raised his hat and turned towards it. Harry stopped him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said he, "but we dine early on Sundays, with the children, and it will give us great pleasure if you will come and take that meal with us. Make it your luncheon, if you dine late."

The old man hesitated, and was about to decline, when the little girl, Annie, caught him by the arm, crying out:

"Oh! you must come, we have got gooseberry tart for dinner," in so earnest a tone that he could not resist her.

He had lived at Shinglebay for two years,

and had never yet made acquaintance with anyone of his own rank in life; it was a wonderful power which this child had over him.

"By-the-bye," he said, suddenly pausing as they were entering the house, "do you know my name?"

"Well, no," replied Harry; "I cannot say that I ever have heard it."

"Then my memory has served me right!" exclaimed the other joyfully; "I thought that it had never been mentioned, for the sailors here all call me captain—I do not know why, for I have no right to the title; probably because I own the only decked boat on the beach. My name is Cook."

"Cook!" cried Minnie.

"Alexander Cook," repeated the other, not noticing her exclamation.

"Alexander Cook! What a curious coincidence!" said Harry.

"Eh?" said Mr. Cook, turning round, and

observing with surprise that his hostess was very pale, and trembling from head to foot.

"My wife's maiden name was Cook—it is not an uncommon one; but her father's Christian name was Alexander, which makes the coincidence rather more striking, especially as he disappeared mysteriously many years ago, and nothing has since been heard of him. But come in, she will be better presently; the associations suddenly called before her by this similarity of name and age have rather disturbed her for the moment."

Mr. Cook gazed hard at Minnie, pressed both hands upon his forehead, shook his head with a sigh, and passed into the house, where the youngest child came bounding forwards with noisy glee at the unexpected appearance of her friend.

"Oh! Harry, can it be?" cried Minnie, eagerly.

"Calm yourself, my dear," said he; "just consider how exceedingly improbable it is."

But secretly he shared her suspicions, and determined to make every possible inquiry as to who Mr. Cook was, and what were his antecedents. That some mental affliction had fallen upon his present guest was evident; he must be very cautious, therefore, how he questioned him; anything like abruptness would probably throw his mind into confusion. No allusion, however remote, was made to the subject while they were all together; but an hour or so after dinner, Harry mentioned that he had been informed that Mr. Cook was a smoker, and invited him to take a walk and a cigar on the beach.

It was a bright, warm, stilly day, and the reflection of the sun's rays from the cliffs and beach-stones had raised the temperature to a considerable height. Harry thought he saw an opening for the commencement of his inquiries, in that old refuge for the destitute, the weather.

"How hot it is!" said he. "I can stand

any amount of cold, but the heat beats me—it makes me so languid. How Europeans can live in India, I cannot imagine."

"You would get used to it, like others," replied Mr. Cook, quite unaware that he was being pumped.

"You have been in India?"

"Oh! yes, I spent the greater part of my life there."

"They say that Burmah is the hottest country in Asia—have you ever been there?"

"Yes, indeed I have. But I do not think that any place but a brick-kiln could beat Calcutta."

"Dear me, you have been to Burmah! You must talk to my wife about that, she is very much interested in the country, as being that in which her poor father—your namesake, you know—was last heard of. He went there from China—you have never been to China, I suppose?"

"Well, yes; they tell me—I mean—I was

once there, but I do not remember much of the country. I was very ill while living in the East, and therefore did not see so much of the country as I should otherwise have done. Swai-ee went with me from China," he murmured to himself; and he became so absent, that it was very little further conversation that Harry could draw him into.

He learned enough, however, to see clearly that, from some unknown cause, the old man had lost remembrance of part of his life, and that a nervous dread of the construction which others might put upon this paralysis of his memory, a fear lest he should be considered a *madman,* had driven him to seclude himself in the way he had done, and rendered him shy of any further questioning. Indeed, little as he had said, it was quite enough to excite the old man's nervous sensibility, and he would not return to tea with Harry, but excused himself on the plea of fatigue and headache, and went home.

"Well?" cried Minnie to her husband when he came in.

"I have little doubt about it, I own," said he; "I feel pretty confident that he is your father."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PROOF OF WHAT EVERYBODY KNEW ALREADY.

MINNIE'S first impulse was, naturally enough, to lay before Mr. Cook all the reasons she had for imagining herself to be his daughter, and to endeavour to carry his memory by storm; but her husband feared that such a course of action might drive him clean out of his wits; and, upon further consideration, she agreed with him that it would be better to broach the subject gently and by degrees. This method of proceeding was likewise approved of and recommended by an eminent physician whom Harry consulted on the following day in London, and so Minnie was

obliged to cultivate her powers of patience and study the art of insinuation. With far finer tact than Harry had exercised, she led her supposed father day after day to talk of his Eastern experiences; she told him her own story, and tried to lead him into drawing inferences for himself, always in a natural manner, and never dragging the subject in by the head and shoulders. And she had plenty of opportunity for pursuing her object, as the old gentleman became very intimate with the family, dropping into the house at all hours, often dining with them, taking them out in his yawl or rowing-boat whenever they would go. It was evident to one watching him so closely as Minnie did, that he had some vague suspicion at times that he was connected in some way with her, and that if he could catch the thread of his early life it would prove the clue by which some mystery which hung over the tie between them, might be traced. There were other and more rare

occasions when a dreamy recollection of isolated events which had happened to him in former years both in England and China flitted across his brain, and when she could seize those comparatively lucid intervals, she would dwell on the singularity of his name and career having been identical with her father's, and question him as to whether he had never met him either in China or Burmah, and what steps she should take to learn whether he was alive.

"I have long given up all hopes of his being in existence," she said, "but since you have so miraculously survived, why should not he have been equally fortunate?"

For Mr. Cook grew accustomed to speak freely of his misfortunes to Minnie, and lost when with her that shrinking sensitiveness which caused him to dread exposing the sad consequences of his Burmese sufferings to others. The worst of it was that these brighter periods when the light of memory

broke fitfully through the heavy clouds which obscured his brain were of very short duration, and were followed by long fits of silent dejection; so that often, just when Minnie thought that the remembrance of having once had a wife and child must surely recur to him amongst the more trifling events which he partially recalled, the gleam faded, and all was darkness.

On one occasion her disappointment was particularly acute. She possessed a carefully hoarded bundle of her father's letters, some addressed to herself, others to Mr. Johnstone, sen., by whom they had been given to her, and it occurred to her one day to try the effect of showing them to him. It was startling. He took them up carelessly, and opened the first that met his hand in his usual weary manner; but the moment his eye fell on the page, he started as if electrified, his whole frame trembled as he eagerly examined the characters.

"Why," he cried, "this is—yes—is my handwriting! Did your——"

Instead of completing his sentence, he pressed his hand on his forehead in the way which was habitual with him, and sank forward on the table with a low moan, remaining in that attitude for several minutes. Minnie durst not disturb him, but stood, quivering with excitement, silently waiting for what he should say or do next. When at last he raised his head, there was a wilder look in his eyes than she had yet seen there.

"Ay," said he, "a silver currency is a very clumsy and cumbersome thing, and the introduction of a gold coinage would be a great convenience."

Minnie was horror-struck; she thought that by her rashness she had overtaxed her father's brain and driven him into hopeless insanity. Happily, however, this was not the case, and the fit soon passed off, leaving the patient so weak and nervous, however, that he had to

return home soon, and was unable to leave the house for two days afterwards.

In spite of delays and discouragements, however, Mr. Cook's mind was gradually and surely becoming prepared to recognise his child, while Harry was slowly accumulating positive proof of the relationship. Miss Lloyd, the eccentric lady from whose house Minnie had been married, was still alive, and, though he could not persuade her to come down to Shinglebay herself, she put him in the way of tracing men of business who had formerly known Mr. Cook. And so, after a great deal of futile correspondence, most of which came back to him boomerang fashion, through the Dead Letter Office, Harry found out the connection which had existed between his father-in-law and Swai-ee, and obtained a letter from the latter, giving a full account of what had happened to Mr. Cook, and the details of his return to England. All this time, his fear of causing disappointment to his wife had warned

him to keep the matter secret from her until there could be no doubt about it whatever, and for that he felt that it would be necessary to bring some living witness face to face with Mr. Cook, who could identify him as the same man who had sent his daughter home from China to be intrusted to Mr. Johnstone's care; but this, so busy had death been among the old man's early friends, he was unable to accomplish, with all his efforts.

And yet chance did what he had been unable to effect.

One Sunday in the early autumn, a strange clergyman came over to take the duty at Shinglebay, who, when the service was over, came forward and accosted Mr. Cook as he walked home with the Johnstones.

"I beg your pardon," said he, "but is not your name Cook? I thought so—you remember me, surely?—my name is Jephson, I was chaplain at Canton. What! do you forget?

—I was with you in your affliction—I baptized your child."

"Jephson!—my affliction!—my child. I had a child, then—I knew it. Stay!" with the old bewildered gesture.

Seeing the clergyman's surprise, Harry drew him on one side, and in a few words put him in possession of the case.

Not to dwell any longer on this part of the story, Mr. Jephson brought his family over from the neighbouring watering-place where he was staying, and devoted himself to aiding the Johnstones in their task, with such happy effect, that Mr. Cook's memory was partially awakened, and he was brought to realize the happy truth that he was no lonely, childless, old man, but that Minnie was in very truth his daughter.

Whether he ever attained to any real recollection of former events, is perhaps doubtful; but every minute detail of the circumstances of his sending his child off from China, and

entrusting her to Mr. Johnstone's care, was so often repeated to him, he pored so continually over his own letters to her and her guardian, that he *thought* he remembered it all. Perhaps he did; but people who have had garrulous nurses are often convinced that they perfectly well remember events which happened when they were one or two years old, or even before they were born—and so perhaps he did not.

It was of course arranged that Mr. Cook should live with his daughter and her husband. He was rich, and had been living at a rate so ridiculously under his income, that the lawyer who had managed all his affairs for him since his return to England had three times invested money for him, and there was now a balance of upwards of a couple of thousands lying idle in his name at the bankers. Under these circumstances, Harry determined to resign his appointment. Had he been a member of any learned profession, or engaged

in business on his own account, I rather think that he would have stuck to it, at least during his father-in-law's life-time; but few men, especially if they have been well-educated, would keep to the occupation of secretary to an assurance office, unless they were actually obliged.

It is impossible to describe Minnie's joy at finding herself after all an heiress. Harry had given up his prospects, and stepped down the social ladder out of his honourable love for her, and never, in all these years, had he by word or look shown the faintest sign of regret for his chivalrous conduct. And now she was able to repay him for all his sacrifices, now he found that the most astute policy could not have paid better than obedience to his frank and generous instinct. His accession to fortune would have rejoiced her, come from what quarter it might; but that it should come through her, was a double triumph. I do not mean to say that she was not pleased to be

rich for her own sake, as well as for that of her children; on the contrary, she appreciated the good things of this world as well as most people, and thought as much of the welfare of her little ones as any other mother; but I do say that her first and principal feeling was joy at being the means of her husband's restoration to the position in society which he had sacrificed for her sake.

An almost equal joy was the thought that her father was rescued from the life of gloomy loneliness in which she had found him, and the power she now possessed of rendering the few years of life which remained to him as cheerful and pleasant as possible. A great change was already perceptible; since he had been finally convinced that Minnie was his daughter, and had taken up his residence in her house, he no longer fretted himself with fruitless endeavours to penetrate into the misty Past; with his daughter and her husband by his side, and his grandchildren at his

knee, the Present had too many charms for him for that.

In the midst of this general happiness the news of Mr. Johnstone, senior's, bankruptcy and flight fell like a thunderbolt.

CHAPTER XIV.

REAPING THE WILD OATS.

You may often hear people complaining of the high house rent they have to pay in London; and I dare say they do expend a sum quite out of proportion with their incomes, for the use of a small habitation in which their families are wofully cramped. "There is no place like Home" is a favourite sentiment with the Briton; and if he be a Londoner his Penates are certainly often very dear to him. But that is because he must needs dwell in fashionable quarters; and if the owner of a house, consisting of an inconvenient kitchen, three diminutive parlours, and four pokey bedrooms,

has to pay sixty pounds a year for ground rent, the tenant must expect to have to give a proportionably exorbitant price for the privilege of living there.

But there are houses, if not in London itself, in its immediate neighbourhood, which are to be had at a far more reasonable rate. Take, for instance, Tom's Row, where you can get a furnished bed-room, with a cupboard opening out of it, in which a bed could be made up on emergency, a sitting room, the use of a kitchen, and maid-of-all-work, for twelve shillings a-week. How do you get to this desirable locality? Why, you cross Waterloo Bridge, and keep straight on until you reach the neighbourhood of Bedlam, then you turn to the left, and then to the right, and then you had better ask the first policeman or chalk-and-water man you see. Or, perhaps, it would be a shorter plan to take a shilling's worth of cab from the Victoria Theatre. Compared with the situation of

some streets in London, that of Tom's Row is positively delightful. There are little gardens between the doors and the pavement, in one of which is a tree of some sort, which you might not, unless you examined it critically, perceive to be dead in the winter; in another, a rose bush, which can only manage to produce leaves, it is true, but the most brilliant author can do no more; and if it bore flowers, unruly boys would immediately pluck them. The road in front is broad, the houses opposite of picturesque irregularity, and adorned with a pleasing variety of chimney pots; there is a public-house round the corner, and the extensive mews at the back are not so very offensive, except in hot weather; while the knacker's-yard in the neighbourhood is only obtrusive when the wind sets in a particular direction. And yet, despite all these positive and negative advantages, Tom's Row is not a favourite residence with the cock-

neys. The doors, window frames, and palings, have not been painted lately; placards intimating that apartments are to let furnished are more common in the windows than those china slabs which turn out to be pictures when held up to the light, and which sometimes deceive the short-sighted lodging hunter; a firework manufacturer inhabits one house, a cheap, and not too respectable, photographer another, while a third is tenanted by a money-lender, who may not be a Jew, but is certainly no Christian, and who bears the reputation of being a miser, an aspersion on his character which he carelessly takes no pains, either by his dress, by care for his personal appearance, or by a liberal style of living, to refute. The inhabitants of the other houses are generally migratory and seedy; or if the attire of some chance resident should seem to contradict this latter epithet, it would be

all the more applicable, I fear, to the morals of the person whose garments were so suspiciously respectable.

The first floor parlour of No. 3 was about the best furnished room in Tom's Row; the moreen curtains which hung on either side of the window were voluminous though faded, the thread-bare carpet had only one hole in it, and that was under the table; there was over the mantelpiece a mirror about two feet square, which did not distort the features much if you stood in a particular position; and amongst other articles of furniture, it contained an armchair which had once had springs in the seat, and a horsehair sofa which could never have been much uglier or more uncomfortable than at present, and might therefore be fairly called "as good as new."

One afternoon about the middle of November, when the heaven was yellow fog mixed with essence of sore throat, the earth

quagmire, and the mid air a shower-bath of half-melted snow, there were three occupants of this apartment. The woman who sits in the armchair by the fire plying her needle may be easily recognized, in spite of her haggard and care-worn look, as Mary Bathurst; the child, who is building a tower of Babel with wooden bricks on the hearth-rug, is as evidently her little girl Louey; but that man asleep on the sofa—can that really be William Bathurst? Most certainly it is, though you would hardly believe that he could have altered so much in a few months. His once florid complexion has turned to a muddy yellow, his face is as thin again as it was; and how could those lines have become engraved so deeply around his mouth and under his eyes in so short a time? Well, circumstances are all against his beauty at this present moment; he looks bilious in the yellow light, his hair is towzled, and a beard

of two days' growth gives him the appearance of a newsman of atheistical tendencies, or an actor performing a minor part in the play of "Macbeth;" his linen is dirty and rumpled, his clothes shabby and untidily buttoned, his slippers down at heel. If he were to be washed, shaved, brushed, invested with a clean shirt and seen by gaslight, he would look ten years better.

The little girl too had changed; the flower did not thrive in that uncongenial atmosphere. She had lost her winning vivacity, and though she played with her bricks, it was evident that she did so to kill time rather than with the idea of accomplishing a unique tower; it is a bad sign when a child is listless.

Mary did not make very rapid progress with her sewing, often stopping to glance now at her husband and now at her child; and sometimes she let her work fall on her lap and sank into a reverie, from which she

would rouse herself with an effort and fasten upon her task with momentary vigour. Presently she stopped—listened; a distant rat-tat was heard; she put her needle-work down on the table, and moved to the window.

The postman was delivering letters at No. 6, where the money-lender lived. No; he did not cross the road, but came on towards her house, and her heart beat sickeningly. He stopped at No. 4, where he deposited several letters for a gentleman who advertised daily in the *Times* that he was prepared to divulge, to all who sent him half-a-crown's worth of postage stamps, the means of making five hundred a year in an elegant and easy way; and then the scarlet collared minister of Fate went out into the mud, and was swallowed up in fog.

"Again no letter!" murmured Mary, returning to her seat; "all mine must have missed them. They told me at the Insur-

ance Office that Harry had resigned, but did not know where he was. And, mamma —has she not got my letters? They must have sent their address to Acton; and that is how I have never got it."

At this moment a slatternly slip-shod girl bounced into the room and began to lay the cloth for dinner. The noise awoke Bathurst, who stretched himself and sat up.

"Dinner time already!" he cried, in a half-whining, half-groaning voice; "I shall not be able to eat a bit. Oh! Mary, my head does ache so!"

Mary waited till the servant had gone out of the room before she replied.

"It is your own fault—you are ruining your health by this foolish and wicked excess. For a few hours' mad excitement at night you are content to pay with days of sickness and suffering; *that* is a debt you cannot avoid discharging."

"I am a fool—I know it—a great fool!" moaned Bathurst.

"I will not dwell on the further misery into which you are dragging your family," pursued Mary, "for you have proved yourself utterly indifferent to all considerations of that sort."

"Oh! don't, Mary—don't talk so! I will never get drunk again—I swear I will not! It is all over now—I see my folly, my madness. I have been a brute, a wretch, and it would have served me right if you had never come near me again. It was remorse drove me to it; I was so unlucky, and when I found that I had impaired our fortune, I grew desperate, and tried to retrieve my losses; and so matters grew worse, and then I could not bear to think, and I had recourse to the only thing which made me forget my real position, and it grew upon me."

"Well, never mind," said Mary, with a

sigh; "do not talk about that now," and she pointed to the child, "but come and try to eat some dinner."

"I cannot swallow a mouthful," said Bathurst, looking ruthfully at his plate; "see what a state my nerves are in! Oh! Mary, do let me have just one small nip of brandy. I will never take it for pleasure again—never! I only want it medicinally."

"Not one drop, William, with my consent."

"Oh! if you only knew what I am suffering! If I had just a little glassful, I believe that I could eat something."

"It is of no use your appealing to me," replied Mary, firmly; "I would as soon think of giving you prussic acid at once, as of being the means of your obtaining the spirit which is killing you as surely, though less mercifully than the poison would. I have some sherry here, you shall have a glass of that."

"But," pleaded the drunkard, "a bottle of gin costs less than one of sherry, and goes so much further!"

And then, seeing that remonstrance was useless, he held out his shaking hand for the wine, which, dearly as he prized every drop of it, he could not raise unspilled to his lips.

Afraid of driving her husband from the house in despair if she denied him altogether the stimulant for which he had such a fearful craving, Mary let him have a couple of glasses, which revived him so much, that he was able, after a while, with the aid of much mustard and pepper, to swallow a few mouthfuls of meat. As to the disposal of the pint of porter which was allowed him, he found no difficulty about that; and when the meal was over, he was inclined to take a more cheerful view of life than had presented itself to his imagination half an hour before.

"Some of these shares which I have not been able to get rid of, will be sure to come into the market again some day," he said, as they sat over the fire in the gloaming; "and, in the meantime, I will put my shoulder to the wheel in earnest. Oh! I am sure to be able to get work in a lawyer's office; and I will be steady for the future. All the rest of my life shall be devoted to atoning for my errors of last year. Papa will go to the nasty City every day, Louey, and make heaps of money!"

And he took the child upon his knee. Louey, who had been unnaturally grave and silent up to that time, looked up in his face and said,

"And papa won't go any more with the naughty major who made us go away from the pretty garden and river, and took the pony away?"

"Why, darling, who put that into your head? It was not Major Leeson who did

that! Papa has been very unfortunate, and has lost a great deal of money; but Major Leeson has been unfortunate and lost his money too."

Louey shook her head and said,

"Papa is always ill when he goes with the naughty major; I don't like him—he's ugly!"

Bathurst said nothing; Mary sighed.

The weak man's reverie ran in this way:

"Poor Leeson! how my wife hates him! And she has taught the child to feel like herself. She is jealous because I like his company—and he is not a ladies' man, certainly, and that is odd, too, considering what a favourite he is amongst—pshaw, that is different. At any rate, he is a thorough good fellow, and clever too! It is true that he has been unlucky, and the good things he meant to put me up to have brought me to a pretty pass. But then he could not help that, and I believe he is more sorry for me

than for himself. A man of his talents must succeed some day, and then it will be all right; it would be foolish, now I am down, to cut the acquaintance of the only man who can set me up again! Still he is too fond of a drop, and has such a head and stomach, that it kills me to try to drink fair with him. I must cut that habit—it is getting too much for me. It is absurd though to suppose that it can be given up all at once; when a fellow has been living entirely on excitement and stimulants for months, he cannot do without them suddenly; it will kill me if I am not let down more easily—I feel it will. I wish Leeson was here to tell me how much I should take and what; brandy and soda is refreshing, but lowering; raw nips injure the coats of the stomach; I think port wine would be about the best thing I could take while breaking myself from drinking. The worst is, it is so expensive—but it would only be for a week

or two; this gnawing would go off if I were to be pretty steady for a fortnight. Oh! what would I give just now, though, for a glass of something hot!"

If Mary could have read her husband's thoughts, the perusal would hardly have stifled her sigh.

Leeson was indeed her bugbear; let his influence once be withdrawn, and she felt confident that she could pluck William back from destruction. And she hoped that the spider would reappear no more, now that the veins of the fly were sucked empty, totally misunderstanding the adventurous *roué's* nature, and attributing to him a prudence and forethought which were totally foreign to him. Leeson could no more have lived on intimate terms for months with a man who bored him for the sake of fleecing him, than he could have stuck to any other unpleasant occupation; while, on the other hand, it must

be said for him, rogue as he was, that he was not capable of knowingly and maliciously plundering a man for whom he felt a friendship. Indeed, he would not have done half the devil's work which he managed to accomplish in this world if he had been a thorough-going and designing villain.

It was not Mary's policy to let her husband grow dull; if he was to be brought to settle to a life of industry, and earn the daily bread of his family by resuming as a servant the law work which he had relinquished as a master, he must be made to feel his home the centre of attraction, not the point of repulsion; so, when candles were brought in and the curtains drawn, she allowed the severity of her manner to relax, and asked him to read an amusing book out to her while she sat at work. For the irritation of his nerves and the restlessness of his brain

was such that he could not read to himself. In order to read out loud, however, he was obliged to make an effort to concentrate his thoughts, and that did him good; and the evening slipped by quite rapidly.

"It is nine o'clock," said Mary at length, "and time for Louey to go to bed. I am going upstairs with her; when I come down again we will have tea."

"Ah!" said Bathurst, "I shall enjoy a cup of tea and a bit of toast, for I did not eat much dinner. So do not be longer than you can help. Good night, Louey dear."

"Good night, papa," said the child, kissing him; "and please," she added in a voice, which her mother, who was lighting a bed candle at the other end of the room, could not hear—"please, papa, don't come to bed tipsy, because the door is very thin, and it frightens me. And do you

know, it frightens mamma too, though she does not say so."

That was a pleasant good night for a man's baby to lisp to him, was it not?

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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